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LOST GENEVIEVE;

OR, THE

CHILD OF AN ESPECIAL PROVIDENCE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "BLIND AGNESE", "THE MINER'S
DAUGHTER", "FLOWERS AND FRUIT",
"THE VIRGIN MOTHER",
ETC., ETC.



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DEDICATION.

I OFFER you this little book, dear children, happy if it afford you amusement—still more happy if it give you one better thought, one more earnest desire, to advance in the virtue of loving confidence in our Heavenly Father. I know not what your future lot in life will be; but this I know, and hold for certain, that whatever it may prove, it will be the one best calculated to insure your eternal felicity; and that, in mingling your cup of joy and sorrow, our good God will act towards you as a careful father, who carries his delicate little one from sunshine to shadow, and from shadow to sunshine, just as its bodily weakness may seem to require. May this thought console you in all your troubles, little or great—may it help you to receive all that it pleases Him to send, with an equal mind and a grateful heart—may it teach you, at all times, and in all seasons, and under all circumstances whatsoever, still to say with Jesus in the garden: “Father, thy will, not mine, be done”.

DEDICATION.

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LOST GENEVIEVE;

OR,

The Child of an Especial Providence.

CHAPTER I.

"Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us".

DAY was just beginning to dawn upon a cold and stormy December night, and the nun who was keeping the last watch in the great Foundling Hospital of Paris, drew yet closer to the wood fire that gave light and warmth to the little room in which she sat. As she did so, she fancied she heard the well-known sound of the bell, giving notice that a poor infant requiring her care had been left in the basket always placed for this purpose within a wheel, by means of which it was afterwards introduced into the convent. The unhappy little creatures, thus strangely admitted, were all received with equal tenderness and love by the religious sisters who superintended the hospital, and whose lives were one long illustration of the love which Jesus Christ felt for these little ones when he said: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven".

Sœur Anne Marie knew well that, on such a

night as the one of which I am speaking, nothing but the most urgent distress could have brought any one from their homes ; therefore, although very doubtful whether the bell had really been rung, she hastened to the place of admittance and turned the wheel. It was as she expected ; there was no infant in the basket, and she was turning slowly away, when the bell once more distinctly rang, and she heard a faint voice on the outside imploring shelter from the storm.

“My good friend”, said the nun, addressing the person outside, “if you have a child which you wish to leave in the convent, place it in the basket, and doubt not it shall be cared for well”. She was not obeyed, however, and the same low, moaning voice seemed to repeat its prayer for admittance. Sœur Anne Marie was a good deal more puzzled than she had ever before been in the discharge of her charitable duties. It certainly was no hour to open the convent gates to a stranger ; yet the voice was the voice of a woman, who might very easily perish of cold and hunger while she was resolving upon what course to pursue. She looked through the aperture of the wall in which the wheel was placed, and, by the faint light now glimmering in the sky, saw something that seemed to be a woman’s garment fluttering in the storm, while the voice of the poor creature came more distinctly to her ears.

“I have come many a long mile from my own home and my own country ; and I shall die if you drive me from your door”.

“No, no”, cried the good nun ; “indeed I cannot

send you away ; but you must wait yet a moment longer, and I will seek the key of the gate and let you in".

She hastened away as she spoke, and in a few minutes returned with another nun, who unlocked the gate and gave entrance to a woman, so drenched with rain, and so shivering with cold, that she could scarcely hold the poor infant which she carried in her arms.

"My good God", cried Sœur Anne Marie, "what weather for a mother and a child to be wandering through the streets ! Give me the little one, my friend, and come and warm yourself by the parlour fire".

The poor woman gave up her child and followed the nun, almost unconscious of where she was or what she was doing ; and when she entered the room, she sat down and gazed vacantly on the fire, without uttering a word. At first the good sisters did not take much notice of her, for they were quite occupied with the child, which seemed scarcely two months old, and was almost stupified by the cold. Sœur Anne Marie removed its dripping garments, while the other nun sought a fresh supply of clothing from a store which was always kept in the room for similar occasions. The mother neither offered to assist or disturb them until she saw they were about to wrap it in a bright-coloured shawl ; then she started from her reverie, and clasping her hands earnestly together, exclaimed :

"Do not dress it in that, I beg of you ; for, at the hour of her birth, I gave my little Genevieve to

Mary, and promised she should wear white in her honour during all the days of her childhood".

"There is but one white shawl here", remonstrated one of the nuns, "and it is very old, and thin, and torn".

"I care not how old, and thin, and torn it is", said the woman, vehemently ; "I beg of you to let her wear no other ; for I gave her to Mary, and I would not take back my gift, nor seem to do so, even in the most trifling particular".

"Well", said Sœur Anne Marie, kindly, "if the dress be old and ragged, it will certainly be more like the garments which Jesus wore in the stable of Bethlehem ; and, therefore, all the more precious to our good Mother's heart will be the little one who wears it, and I will fold it twice round, and then it will be quite warm enough. See, it opens its eyes, and is getting quite a colour in its cheeks already. Take it in your arms, my good friend ; it will do it good to lie once more upon its mother's bosom".

"I dare not touch it", said the woman ; "I am so cold and wet I should chill it again almost to death".

"And so you are", cried Sœur Anne Marie, in a tone of deep self-reproach ; "I am ashamed of myself that I should have forgotten that you must be even wetter than the child. *Ma sœur*, will you hold it for a moment, while I seek some dry clothing in the chest ?"

Sœur Placide willingly complied with this request ; and the little nun, who, without any appearance of fuss or confusion, was as quick as lightning in all her movements, soon produced a peasant's full suit

of clothing from her store of such articles, and helped the poor half-frozen mother to put them on instead of her own, which were then placed carefully before the fire to dry.

“And now that you are dry and pretty warm once more, you must have a cup of coffee and something to eat, for though you have said nothing about it, I suspect you have been hungry all this time, as well as cold”.

“The money which I kept for the purpose was all spent before I had even made half my journey”, said the poor woman with a sigh. “Since then I have lived the best way I could : sometimes getting a meal at the convents, and sometimes at the poor cottages I passed on the road ; to-day I have had nothing but a crust of bread and a cup of cold water”.

“A cup of cold water ! That was sorrowful fare, indeed. I wish we had something more substantial to give you, but we have only bread and coffee here, and it is too early as yet to procure anything better. However, I will make the coffee very hot and strong, and it will warm you at any rate until we can get ready a good breakfast for you”.

As Sœur Anne Marie spoke, she drew forward a little table, upon which she had laid out the provisions intended for her own breakfast and that of Sœur Placide ; and pouring out a cup of boiling coffee, sat down by the poor woman, and pressed her to eat. She even took a little herself of the good things she had provided, when she found that her companion was ashamed or unwilling to do so alone ; and her manner all the time was so simple

and yet so gracious, it seemed as if she was rather receiving a favour than trying to confer one ; and such, indeed, was really the case, Sœur Anne Marie being one of those generous beings who find it a more blessed thing to give than to receive. Tears of gratitude were in the poor woman's eyes, and from her very heart of hearts she thanked the little nun, as this last once more placed the infant on her bosom, and in her sweet, happy voice (which only sympathy for others prevented from being as cheerful as a child's) told her how much she and all the sisters would cherish the innocent creature committed to their charge, and how she herself would often, when Genevieve was old enough to understand, tell her of all that her mother had suffered in order to place her in that asylum of peace. "And then", continued the kind nun, "she will learn to love you still, though she is separated from you, and will rejoice when you are rich enough to claim her for your own : for I am sure nothing but the severest poverty could ever have induced you to part from your child".

"Alas, no ! my good sister", said the woman, weeping bitterly ; "it is not poverty which forces me to abandon my own, my only child ; it is crime, not my own, nor yet my husband's. . I thank God, we are innocent, but still, in the eyes of the world, we are degraded and condemned as though we had been guilty of the most unworthy actions".

"This is indeed very sad", said Anne Marie, gently ; "and yet you must take courage, my good friend ; you are not the first, neither, I fear, will

you be the last, who, though innocent, have suffered the punishment of guilt”.

“That is very true, I know”, said the poor woman; “but it does not at all comfort me, good sister, to feel that others have been as unfortunate as myself”.

“It should not console you, certainly; but I think it ought to encourage you. Others have been also unjustly condemned, and they have, perhaps, accepted this misfortune willingly, as coming from the hands of their Heavenly Father, who certainly sent it to them in mercy, either that they might acquire a great merit by their patient acquiescence, or might atone for their past sins in this life rather than the next. Let us imitate their good example, my dear child, and who knows but this tender Parent may take pity upon us at last, and reward our submission to his divine will, by discovering our innocence to those who have considered us guilty”.

“And in the meantime, we must bear the punishment of the guilty”, said the poor woman, sobbing; “that is dreadful, good sister”.

“Think how much more dreadful it would have been had you been really guilty”, urged the sister, gently. “Then you would have had two sorrows to endure—the punishment of crime, and its remorse, which is by far the most intolerable burden of the two”.

“No, good sister, I thank my God we do not suffer from remorse; for Pierre was as innocent of the crime as this child in my arms. But oh! think of the terrible disgrace. He is condemned as a galley-

slave for the rest of his life ; and he who was so honest, so upright, so much respected by all who knew him, will now spend his days among felons, chained like a dog to some miserable creature, who will mock at his protestations of innocence, and believe him as guilty and degraded as himself”.

“ One there was”, answered the nun, and her voice became so sweet and low it seemed like music to her listener’s ear ; “ *One* there was, who, being most innocent, suffered himself to be considered as guilty ; and who, being most high, made himself poor and lowly for our love. Truly he was accounted among the wicked, he was esteemed as a leper and as one struck by God, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people ; a thief was chosen in preference to him ; in the company of thieves he suffered the punishment due to their crimes, and the scoffing voice of a thief was added to the mockeries by which he was saluted in that hour of woe. And, oh ! dearest sister, tell me why the sweet Jesus endured all these things, if it were not to teach us also to suffer something for his sake. The more closely our sorrows resemble his, the more entirely will he receive us into his glory hereafter. Let us, then, drink lovingly of the chalice which he gives us, and let us remember that he asks us but to taste it, while he himself drained it to the very dregs”.

The poor woman wept abundantly while Sœur Anne Marie spoke, but her tears no longer flowed in unmingled bitterness. Love was burning in her heart, love for the sweet Jesus, and thoughts of patient submission to his will, and of humble endeavours

to walk in his footsteps, passed, like angel visits, through her soul, bringing with them a sense of sweetness and consolation which, half-an-hour before, she had not believed herself capable of ever feeling again.

The sister said no more ; she was well versed in the art of binding up the broken heart, and she knew that such tears as the sorrowful creature was shedding then were better than all the words of comfort she could hear, so she only showed her sympathy by quietly removing the infant from her arms, in order that she might weep more entirely without restraint. At last the poor woman dashed away her tears, and said, as if with a violent effort :

“ Oh ! if you could speak to poor Pierre as you have spoken to me, you would indeed be a good angel to him. But that is impossible”, she added, despondingly, “ for he was to be sent to Marseilles, and I suppose he is there, or half way there already, by this time”.

“ You must try, then, to be his good angel yourself, my friend, and to cherish patience in your own heart first, in order that you may be able afterwards to impart it to his, for, from your wishing to leave your child at the hospital, I conclude you mean to follow him to his destination”.

“ Oh, yes”, sobbed the woman, “ I intend to join him ; and I will never leave him, but try to comfort him all I can”.

“ If you would give him the only consolation that can be of any real use to him, my poor friend, you must try to make him love his punishment, and you

must endeavour to do so yourself, because it will make him the more loved of Jesus. This will, indeed, be a difficult task; but you must pray, and we will all pray hard, both that you may have grace to attempt it, and that your efforts may be crowned with success".

"How good it is of you", said the woman, as if struck by a sudden recollection, "to believe poor Pierre innocent upon my bare word. I said so many and many a time in open court, but the judge would not believe me, or even listen to what I said".

"You could not expect that he would; for he naturally suspected you of partiality to your husband. He was obliged to judge by what he heard from others; and, alas! in these cases appearances are often as unfavourable to the innocent as they are favourable to the guilty".

"But you have believed me without asking me a single question".

"I am not a judge", said Soeur Anne Marie, smiling, "and I do not pretend to be wiser than my divine Master, who said: 'Let him that is without sin cast the first stone'".

"Then it is not that you do not condemn, but only that you *will not*?" said the woman, in a tone of anguish which went quite straight to the little nun's gentle heart.

"Do not think so, I beg of you", she answered earnestly. "From my very soul I believe him innocent; I only meant to say that a judge cannot consult his own feelings, as I can do, in a case like this; he must decide by the testimony that is brought before him".

“That is true”, replied the poor woman ; “and the testimony was certainly very strong against him. I cannot understand it even now ; and if I had not been acquainted with his rigid honesty, I should certainly have believed him guilty myself”.

“Do you think he had any enemies among those who accused him?”

“He was not liked, certainly”, said the woman, with some reluctance in her manner ; “but I never heard that he had any particular enemy”.

“Not liked !” said the nun ; “how came that?”

“He was a little too severe”, she answered, hesitatingly ; “a little too harsh with those who were under him ; they used to say he was proud ; but I should like to tell you his history, for then you would see that this was almost his only fault. Poor fellow, poor fellow”, she sobbed, in an under tone ; “he will never be proud again ; this disgrace will certainly break his heart”.

“I trust not”, answered the nun ; “on the contrary, I hope it will soften it into a closer resemblance to the meek and humble heart of his crucified Saviour”.

“Sometimes I hope so too, dear sister ; for he cried like a child when he took leave of me in prison ; and he was more gentle and subdued than I had ever seen him before”.

“Well, then, my dear child, God has already begun to draw some good out of all this evil that has fallen upon you ; and, believe me, it is ever thus. Our Heavenly Father never strikes us but to make us turn more entirely towards him ; and for anything we know, perhaps in spite of all his other

good qualities, pride might have kept your husband far from the love and friendship of his Creator, if he had not been humbled by this timely affliction”.

“ I feel you are right, dear sister ; and I hope that in time poor Pierre will learn to think so too ; but I wish you would let me tell you our story, for then you would see how impossible it was for him to prove his innocence”.

“ If it is any comfort to you, I will hear it most willingly”, Sister Anne Marie replied ; “ only you must make haste, for all the convent is astir by this time, and one of the sisters will soon come to relieve me at my post”.

“ It can all be told in a very few words”, the woman answered. “ Time out of mind my husband’s family have been superintendants on the property of the Count de Serrant, in our native province of Brittany. It is a charge of great responsibility, for the estates are large, and, while yet almost a boy, Pierre was appointed to it upon the death of his father. People shook their heads ; they thought he was too young for such a trust, but the old Count persisted in his choice ; he said all Pierre’s family were honest from the cradle, and that he would trust the youngest among them with the whole of his property. Perhaps it was this great confidence reposed in him by one person, and this great want of it shown him by others, which first roused up the pride of his character, and made him the stern, hard man he afterwards became. He has often told me since, that he then made a solemn resolution to prove his benefactor right, and his enemies wrong, by his di-

ligent attention to business, and unswerving probity of conduct”.

“It was the best answer he could make to both”, said the nun, gently; “and we will hope it was not pride alone, but that higher and better motives had their share in this resolve”.

“I am quite sure of it”, cried the wife, eagerly; “but still I cannot deny that his pride was hurt at all these unjust suspicions, particularly as they were shared in by the young Count, who openly expressed them, and had more than one dispute with his father on the subject. Pierre, therefore, felt as if every one were watching him with an evil eye; and this helped to give him that harsh manner which made him, at last, so much disliked among the people over whom he was placed”.

Sœur Anne Marie looked compassionately at the poor woman, as the thought involuntarily crossed her mind, that she, perhaps, had suffered more than any one else from the morose disposition she described. She did not hint her suspicion, however, and the other went on:

“And yet he was really charitable, and gave more to the poor than any one else in the country—except, indeed, the old Count and his wife. But, somehow or other, he always did charity as if it was against his will, and so no one ever was half as grateful to him as they would have otherwise been”.

“I can easily believe it, my dear child; we must give cheerfully, if we wish our gift to be gratefully received. But, from all you tell me, I can easily perceive that your husband meant well, though his manner was so unfortunate”.

“ Yes, dear sister, he meant well ; but, as you say, his manner was unfortunate. I have often seen him, in a fit of temper, drive poor creatures from the door, and five minutes afterwards he has desired me to give them an abundant alms ; but, as he never allowed me to mention his name on these occasions, it is no wonder he acquired a reputation for cruelty among the poor. I forgot to tell you that I was brought up by the old Countess, who gave me a better education than is generally received by persons in my state of life ; to which she added a small pension on my marriage with Pierre. Unluckily for us, she died some time after this, and the old Count soon followed her to the grave. He was succeeded by his son, who, as I have already told you, was prejudiced against Pierre ; and, though he did not deprive him of his situation, he harassed him by a series of unjust suspicions, most grievous to the pride of an honest heart. Pierre bore it, however, with the dogged resolution which is a part of his character. He thought the Count was seeking for a decent excuse to get rid of him, and he was determined to give him none ; he even hoped, by perseverance, to force him into a conviction of his honesty. The young Countess did not share in her husband’s dislike ; she was very kind to me, and as she had some property of her own in the neighbourhood, she often consulted Pierre on matters of business. One unhappy evening she sent for him rather later than usual ; he was a long time away, and when he returned I saw directly that something had very much ruffled his temper. Afterwards I found out that on leaving Madame de Serrant, he had had a long and

angry conversation with his lord, who taxed him with dishonesty ; and, on Pierre's indignantly repelling the accusation, and daring him to prove it, he told him he might consider himself as discharged from his office. Pierre felt this blow most keenly, and the more so, because he knew that every man in the country would rejoice at his downfall, and would unjustly attribute it to some evil dealings of his own. I tried to comfort him as well as I could, but he was too indignant willingly to accept of consolation just then ; so, when I found that he repulsed me with anger, I went to bed and cried myself to sleep. I was awoke the next morning by a strange noise in the room below me ; and when I looked out of the window, I could scarcely believe that I was still in my senses. The house was surrounded by a party of gendarmes, and five minutes afterwards I saw Pierre, handcuffed like a prisoner, marching away in the midst of them. I learned the whole story soon enough from the young man who assisted my husband in making up his accounts, and who was with him at the time when the officers of justice first entered the cottage. It seems that when the Count sent for Pierre on the evening before, he desired the servants to bring him to his own private sitting-room, where he kept all the jewels of his family. Pierre was left here alone some minutes before the Count entered, and after his departure it was discovered that one of the cabinets had been forced open, and a valuable diamond necklace abstracted from among its contents. The jealous suspicions of the Count were instantly di-

rected against my husband ; he found, of course, no difficulty in procuring an order for his imprisonment, and came himself with the soldiers to put it into execution. Pierre was indignant beyond measure when he heard the accusation ; he appealed to the well-known integrity of his whole life as a sufficient answer to the charge, and besought them to search the house for the diamonds that were missing. This they did without further ceremony, and proceeding at once to an old lumber-room at the back of the house, they examined everything it contained with extraordinary care ; and in an old trunk, which Pierre says he had not even opened for ages, they discovered a large cross, set in diamonds, which the Count identified as having been appended to the necklace—”

“ My good God”, said the nun, “ who could have left it there ?”

“ Who, indeed ?” said the poor woman, sighing : “ an enemy, no doubt ; but who that enemy may be we do not know, nor shall we be able to discover. Upon this most sorrowful day my Genevieve was born. Poor little thing ! I had looked forward to her birth with so much gladness of heart, and now she came to me in the midst of my misery—a child of shame, of sorrow, and of tears. It was then I devoted her to the Mother of many sorrows ; and oh ! how often, during the weary hours that followed, did I not beg of Mary to take into her very heart of hearts this unconscious little one, even then suffering from the malice of that world which had crucified her Son ! Two months afterwards Pierre

was tried for the robbery, and found guilty. This was only what I had expected; it could not have been otherwise; facts were entirely against him; and the Count, who was all-powerful, strained every nerve to procure his condemnation. He, alas! saw his child for the first time on the morning when he learned that he was condemned to the galleys for life. Poor fellow! how changed he was from the proud, cold man I had known him before. He seemed to feel more for me and the child than he did for himself; and he was deeply moved when I told him I was resolved to share in his disgrace, and to live and die with him wherever he was sent. He would not, however, at first consent to this proposal; he said he could not bear to think of his innocent child being brought up among the guilty men who were to be his future associates, and he urged that even if such society did not injure her morals, the mere fact of having mingled in it would brand her for life as the daughter of a felon. I felt he was right in all he said, and so we parted, as he thought, for ever; but no sooner had I left the prison than I hastened to church, and besought Almighty God to be himself a father to the child I was about to abandon; I spoke to him as I had never been moved to speak to him before; I besought him as I had never known how to beseech him until then. After this, I entreated once more the intercession of Mary, begging her to place my Genevieve in her own sinless heart and in the sacred heart of her divine Son, and besought her to watch with even more than a mother's love over this poor

infant, who was about to be made as completely an orphan as if death had in reality deprived her of her parents”.

“And surely your prayers will be heard”, said Anne Marie, as the poor mother paused, overcome by the vehemence of her own emotions; “fear not, but that he who clothes the lilies of the field, and has given his only Son for the redemption of the world, will also keep your little one from want, and preserve her in her innocence, unstained by sin”.

“I do not doubt it, dear sister; for during that hour of prayer the idea of this convent came like an inspiration to my mind. I remembered once having gone over it when residing in Paris with my old mistress, and I had often since heard the young countess speak of it with delight; I even fancied she had told me the religious sisters received many children who were neither orphans nor foundlings, but whose parents had been forced to abandon them under circumstances of extreme distress”.

“We receive all who are placed in the wheel, and it does sometimes happen that the parents afterwards reclaim their children. In this case they generally leave some little article with the infant, by means of which they can identify it hereafter”.

“Two hours after this thought occurred to me”, continued the poor woman, “I was on my road to Paris; but I will not weary you with a history of my adventures by the way. I shall be well repaid for all my sufferings if you tell me you will receive my child, and educate her in the fear and love of her Heavenly Father. I must add, however, that

I do not mean her to be a burden on your charity. They cannot deprive me of the pension which the old countess settled upon me, and this I make over entirely to you for her subsistence. See, I have brought the first year's payment in advance", she added, producing a small purse from her bosom; "it is not much, but I hope it is sufficient for the support of an infant. Rather than break in upon this store, I submitted to ask food and shelter, like a common beggar, on the road".

"You must suffer me to speak to the superior on this subject", answered Sœur Anne Marie; "it seems to me too large a sum; and, at any rate, I have no power either to take or to refuse it".

A knock at the door at this moment summoned her away; but she soon returned, bringing with her a lady, at sight of whom the poor woman retreated to the further end of the room with a mingled expression of doubt and amazement depicted on her countenance. Without seeming, however, to notice this, the lady went up to her at once, and putting her arms around her, said, in a kind and sympathizing voice: "Dear Elise, you must not fly from me any further, for I have followed you all the way from Brittany already".

"Then *you* believe Pierre innocent?" burst from the poor woman's lips, in a tone of most joyful surprise.

"Indeed I do, my friend; as innocent as myself, or the poor babe in your arms; but you were wrong to run away without first consulting me".

"You did not visit me during my illness, madame; and that was so unlike you, that I thought you judged us guilty".

“You thought wrong”, the lady answered, with some embarrassment in her manner; “but I could not—that is, my husband did not wish me to see you just then. Three days ago, however, he allowed me to visit Pierre in his prison. Poor fellow, he was to be sent the next day to Marseilles; and he showed me the letter in which you acquainted him with your intentions regarding your child”.

“And you took the trouble of following me here”, said poor Elise in a faltering voice; “but it was only like you, madame, for you were always so good and kind”.

“My good friend”, said the countess, with much emotion, “it is neither good nor kind, but a simple act of justice which I perform. I feel you have been deeply injured by the unhappy suspicion of my husband, and I wish to repair that injury as far as I can, by offering to become myself the mother of the child you are compelled to abandon”.

A bright look of gladness passed over the poor woman's face; but it faded away, and she said, in a hesitating voice:

“But the Count de Serrant, madame?”

“He has himself permitted me to make this offer; and Pierre assured me that if you gave your consent to this arrangement, it would take an intolerable burden off his mind”.

“Mary has prayed well for you”, said Sœur Anne Marie, pressing the weeping woman's hand within her own. “See how the divine providence of our Heavenly Father has already provided a home for this little one”.

“Pierre also desired me to say”, continued the countess, “that he could not ask you to join him at Marseilles, but that if you were generous enough to do so, your society would be the greatest comfort he could hope for upon Earth”.

“I will go to him at once”, cried Elise, starting up from her chair; “he has already set out, and I shall be a longer time upon the road”.

“You are not fit to travel yet”, urged the countess; “you must come home with me, and rest for a few days before you set out”.

“Oh, no! no!” cried the woman, wildly; “every moment that I stay with my child but increases the anguish; I will set out this very instant”.

“But you must make some arrangements before you leave Paris, and therefore it would be well to accept the kind office of madame”, observed the nun, gently.

“I cannot enter the hotel of the Count de Ser-rant”, said Elise, firmly. “I am sure Pierre would be displeased if I did so”.

“If that is all”, replied the countess, “I can bring you to the house of a most respectable woman, who was formerly my maid, and who will gladly give you shelter for the night, I am sure”.

“If you please, madame”, answered Elise, “I will go there this moment, for the sight of that child is killing me”.

“Perhaps you are right, my poor Elise; the sooner this terrible parting is over, the better. I will bring you there in my carriage, and Sœur Anne Marie, or one of the other nuns, will, I am sure,

take charge of the infant until I can find a proper person to nurse it".

The kind nun readily agreed to this proposal, and poor Elise, summoning up all her resolution, laid her infant on the little bed, and knelt beside it. Her hands were clasped in prayer, but she did not utter a word, for grief had almost choked her ; and then she took it once more into her arms, and pressed it for the last time to her aching heart, kissing, over and over again, its lips, its eyes, and little hands. No wonder, when she placed it at length on the bosom of the pitying nun, that its pretty face was completely deluged with her tears. Madame de Serrant saw it would not do to let her linger longer, so she led her at once to the carriage, into which she had no sooner entered, than she covered her face with her hands, and never spoke or looked up again until they had reached their place of destination. Here the countess herself assisted the miserable creature from the vehicle, leading her up stairs with as much care as if she had been her sister ; and Elise sat down, and listened to the arrangements her kind friend was making for her comfort in all the apathy of speechless sorrow. When, however, Madame Serrant was about leaving the room, with a promise of returning again in the evening, she sprang up from her chair, and, throwing herself on her knees, exclaimed : " Oh ! madame, I am not ungrateful, though I may seem so just now".

" I know you are not, my poor Elise", said the countess, embracing her tenderly ; " and I will endeavour to deserve your love by being a true mother to your child".

“Teach her to be humble, madame—*very, very humble*; for I feel that her parents have been punished for their pride”.

“I will do what I can, dear Elise; and I trust God and our Blessed Lady will do the rest”.

“Do not give her an education above her own rank in life, I implore you, madame; bring her up as a farmer’s daughter; but, oh! never let her know that she is the child of a felon. Conceal her name, if possible, lest she should learn to blush at the mention of her parents”.

“Calm yourself, dear Elise; it shall be exactly as you wish”.

“And should she ever ask who they are”, murmured the unhappy woman, “say to her there is no one on earth who will ever claim her for their own; yet that she is not altogether an orphan, for she is the child of Divine Providence, and Mary is her mother”.

Elise sank fainting on the floor as she finished speaking, and Madame de Serrant assisted her landlady to place her in bed, and never left her until a sound sleep brought temporary forgetfulness of all her misfortunes.

CHAPTER II.

“Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us”.

DIRECTLY after leaving Elise, the countess returned to the convent, and sending for the superior, pro-

posed that the child should be left under her care for a few days longer, until she herself had procured a proper person to take charge of it. This business being easily arranged, she asked to see the little Genevieve, and embracing it tenderly, hung a magnificent diamond cross around its neck as her first gift to her adopted child. The superior smiled, and ventured to remonstrate against such an extravagant present to a little peasant girl; but she was silenced by the answer of the countess: "It was the trinket", she said, "which had been found in her father's house, and which had formed the only real evidence of crime against him. But I believe in Pierre's honesty as firmly as I do in my own, and therefore I give this unserviceable bauble to his child as some poor atonement for the injustice which has been shown him. Should Genevieve hereafter learn the unhappy story of her parents, the possession of this cross will give her the consolation of knowing that I at least never for an instant considered him guilty".

"Yet the evidence was certainly strong against him", observed the superior, who had heard the whole story from Sœur Anne Marie.

"It was", answered Madame de Serrant; "yet I feel certain that that cross was left in his house by the contrivance of some hidden foe; for, alas! his proud, morose nature made him far more enemies than his other good qualities could acquire him friends".

"It is very easy to believe that", said the superior, smiling. "The pride of other people jostles

against our own, and therefore we pardon that fault less easily than most of those to which human nature is subject”.

“Yes”, replied the countess. “We think our indignation is against the sin, when, in reality, it is against the sinner, who has lessened our pretensions by too great a parade of his own”.

“Poor Elise has left her purse here, madame: perhaps you will be kind enough to restore it, should you see her this evening. She will want it for her journey”.

“I have already provided for her expenses on the road”, the countess replied; “but I will send her this money as soon as I hear of her safe arrival at Marseilles. She might perhaps object to receive it if I offered it now”.

Madame de Serrant then took leave of the superior, and went to her hotel, where she found an express from her husband, stating she need not return to Brittany, as he had resolved to give up the country, and to make Paris entirely his residence for the future. The kind heart of the lady rejoiced at this decision, for she felt it would be much easier to conceal the history of her parents from little Genevieve while living in a great city, than if residing at the chateau, where it was so perfectly well known already. She resolved, however, to procure a nurse from the country for the child, and her choice fell upon a poor woman who, in by-gone days, had often received kindness from Elise, and who, for this reason, she hoped would be inclined to treat the deserted little girl with more affection than

a common hired servant was likely to do. The result proved that she was right. Mimi had a grateful, loving heart; and having just lost her husband and only child, there was no one left to divide her affections with Genevieve, to whom she soon became as fondly attached as if she had really been her mother. Under her care the little girl soon lost all symptoms of the extreme delicacy which she had shown at first, and which had been produced by long exposure to cold and rain on the night of her first arrival in Paris; and by the time she had reached her third year, she was such a graceful, caressing little fairy, that Madam de Serrant, who was childless herself, was in a fair way of forgetting her promise to the mother, and of bringing her up as if she had been a daughter of her own. Fortunately, she was prevented from putting this plan into execution, by the dislike which the count ever expressed for Genevieve. Perhaps some consciousness of injustice done to her father had a share in this feeling; but whatever was the cause, the very sight of the child seemed to rouse him to anger, and one day he bitterly reproached his wife with neglecting every other duty in order to fondle the offspring of a felon. Madam de Serrant was playing with Genevieve at the time; but she was used to receive hard words without a reply, so she only pressed the unoffending little one closer to her bosom, and walking quietly out of the room, consigned her to the care of her nurse. From thence she retired to her own apartment, and there, at the foot of the crucifix, with many bitter tears, she

offered to God the sacrifice of the affection she had felt for this child, and which she knew could be no longer reconciled with the duty she owed to her husband. "If he does not like it, it must not be", thought she; and from that time Genevieve was no longer sent for to the drawing-room or dressing-room of the countess, as formerly; instead of which, Madam de Serrant came for a few brief moments every morning into her nursery, in order to ascertain that she was properly taken care of. The child was quite old enough to feel this change, though she could not understand it, and she cried sadly when told by Mimi that she must no longer call the countess mama, but madam, as she heard every one else address her.

"But who, then, is mamma?" she used constantly to say. "Some one must be mama". Poor Mimi was terribly at a loss to answer this question. "My own darling", she would say, in her perplexity, "do I not love you as if I were your mother?" But Genevieve was too quick a child to be so easily deceived. "You have always been my nurse, and every child I know of has a nurse, and a mama besides, and where, then, is mine, I wonder?" And the little girl, who had never been denied anything in her life before, cried bitterly at Mimi's obstinate refusal to gratify her wishes in this particular instance. "Listen to me, my child", said the good woman, folding Genevieve's little fingers in her own; "women sometimes die when their children are very young, and then the little ones are left without a mother". "And did my

mama die when I was very young?" asked Genevieve, suspending her sobs, and wiping the great tears out of her eyes, in order to listen more attentively to her nurse's reply.

"You lost your mother when you were a baby", said Mimi, who hoped in this way to evade the question without positively telling a falsehood.

"Then I have no mama to kiss me and love me as madame used sometimes to do", said the poor child, in a tone that went right to her nurse's heart.

"Yes, my child, you have a mother", she said, folding the little thing fondly to her bosom. "Her name is Mary, and she is also the mother of the little Jesus, whom you used to love so much when we talked about him last Christmas".

"But Mary is in Heaven. She cannot take me in her arms as madam always did".

"Remain but innocent and pure, my child", the good woman answered, "and then, when you go to Heaven, Mary will also take you into those arms which once were folded round the Infant Jesus".

"But upon Earth I have no one to take care of me", Genevieve mournfully persisted.

"Content yourself, my child; God himself watches over you, and will not suffer a hair to fall from your head without his permission. He is, indeed, the father of us all; but to the widow and the orphan he is more especially a parent. Believe me, the sweet Jesus loves you better than any one on Earth can do. And he will readily give you everything you want, particularly if you beg of Mary to speak to him for you".

As Mimi spoke thus, she drew Genevieve gently towards an image of Madonna, which was placed in the room, and the child involuntarily fell on her knees, and clasping her tiny hands together, repeated aloud the simple prayer of her childhood: "Oh, my most dear mother, beg of your divine Son to give me his blessing, and please to give me yours likewise".

From that time Genevieve was pacified, and she soon learned to speak of her good mother, who watched over her from Heaven with the little Infant Jesus in her arms, as lovingly and as familiarly as though she were daily in their company. In all her childish misfortunes, she sought comfort from Mary as naturally as other children look for it in the arms of their mother; and whenever she wished particularly for any little pleasure, she used to kneel unbidden before the image of the Madonna, and tell her good mother in Heaven what it was that she wanted, with the utmost simplicity. If she gained her desire, she never forgot to give thanks very devoutly for the favour; and when, on the contrary, it was denied, Mimi easily persuaded her docile little heart that Mary only refused her because it was not good for her to have it. "Just as I sometimes will not give you *bon bons*, my darling", continued the old nurse, "though I love you so dearly, because I know they will certainly make you sick if you eat them". Mimi was neither educated nor clever, but she had a simple confidence in the goodness of God which never forsook her, and which made her look upon everything that happened as a proof of his

love. If the weather was bad, he had sent his rain to freshen the green field, and to bring forth the flower; if it were fine, he had bidden his sun to shine to gladden the young lambs, and to make the birds sing merrily in the trees. It was the same in every other circumstance of life, whether of sorrow or of joy: to use the expression of St. Francis de Sales, she invariably took the part of Providence against herself, and this habit of right thinking gave an unruffled sweetness to all her words and looks, which soon drew the heart of her nursling in the same direction. Under her care, Genevieve became a much better child than she could ever have been had she remained the spoiled darling of the countess; and thus, little as she thought of it at the time, the first great grief of her childhood was a real blessing sent by her Heavenly Father to preserve her from evil. She was much too young, however, to understand all this; but, alas! we who are older, and ought to know better, too often imitate the unconscious child, and repine at our misfortunes, instead of considering them as so many favours which he sends us in his love, in order that, by our cheerful acceptance of them, we may lay up to ourselves treasures in Heaven, where the thief cannot approach, nor the moth consume. Genevieve was about six years old when this change in her fortunes occurred, and two years afterwards the Count de Serrant made a journey to Italy for the health of his wife, who had become exceedingly delicate. At first the countess seemed to derive but little benefit from the change; and soon after her arrival at

Rome she was taken so seriously ill that her life was despaired of for many months. During this time Mimi was almost the only person she could bear to approach her, and the life of Genevieve became, in consequence, more desolate than ever. She often sat for hours alone in her deserted nursery, and when the dusk of evening began to creep over the room, and no one thought of bringing a candle to chase it away, she would, as a last resource, kneel before the beloved image of the Madonna, and twining her little arms round its feet, pray her dear mother that madam might get well, and Mimi be sent back to her; and so she often sobbed herself to sleep.

In vain the old nurse remonstrated, and threatened the other servants with the displeasure of her lady, whenever she should be well enough to be told of their conduct to Genevieve. They well knew the poor child was no favourite with their lord, so they only laughed at all she could say on the subject. One young girl, however, more kind-hearted than the rest, sometimes contrived to pay her a visit, and to bring her meals when Mimi was unable to do so herself. Once or twice she even ventured to take her out for a walk, but this was always late in the evening, as her employment prevented her leaving the house during the day. This was now Genevieve's greatest treat, and her eyes quite sparkled with joy when, at the end of one long, dull, Easter Monday, Manette entered her room and asked her if she would like to come out for a walk.

"But, dear Manette, it is late, is it not?" said

Genevieve, looking at the candle, almost burnt down in the socket, "and Mimi will think, perhaps, I ought to go to bed?"

"Mimi will not be here for an hour, and I have not time to put you to bed, for I am going to see the most beautiful sight in the world".

"Oh, pray, tell me what it is", cried the child. "Do, dear Manette, tell me what you are going to see!"

"The fireworks let' off from the Castle of St. Angelo", cried the girl. "Monsieur Francois has been telling me all about it, and I am wild to see them. So you must either wait here for Mimi, or come at once with me, for I am late already, and have not a minute to lose".

It was impossible to resist the promised delight, especially as Manette assured her they could easily be back in an hour. So Genevieve suffered her head to be wrapt in the white veil which the countess always made her wear instead of a bonnet, and in high spirits set out with her companion. Manette was not very timid, so she managed, with some little trouble, to make her way through the crowd of spectators, and to secure a good place for seeing all that was to be seen. Genevieve, on the contrary, who had never mixed in such a crowd of persons before, felt very much frightened at first, and kept fast hold of her companion's hand; and had she only continued to do so, no misfortunes could possibly have occurred; but when once the fireworks began to go off, she forgot everything else in her joy and wonder. Rocket after rocket gleamed

in quick succession through the deep blue skies, and then, shivering into atoms, fell like a shower of silver stars upon the earth. Then followed brilliant representations of castles, cascades of golden fire, thousands of fiery snakes and hissing dragons darting up as far as ever the eye could reach. Genevieve clapped her hands in an ecstasy of delight, and just at this unlucky moment a sudden movement in the crowd separated her from her companion. It was some time before she was conscious of this change in her position; but when the last bright spark had melted away in the heavens, and she turned to look for Manette, it was only to find herself surrounded by a circle of strange faces. Poor child! At first she could scarcely believe her own senses, and she rubbed her eyes, fancying they were yet dazzled by the light upon which they had been gazing. Alas! when she looked again, it was all the same; Manette was no longer at her side; and then, with a desperate effort, she tried to force her way through the crowd, crying out "Manette, Manette"; but no one answered; and indeed in the universal hubbub and confusion of voices which followed the exhibition, it was next to impossible that her's could have been heard. People now began to move away, and, unable to resist the pressure of the crowd, the weeping child was borne along, she could not tell whither. Presently, however, it dispersed in different directions, and, once more mistress of her own movements, Genevieve dried her eyes, and niching herself into a dark corner, watched them as they went and came, fancying she must by this means discover Manette.

Poor little silly one ! it never occurred to her that this might not be the way to her home, or that Manette might be looking for her in quite an opposite direction. So there she stood almost hidden from the careless passers-by, holding in her breath, and swallowing the tears which would have impeded her vision had they risen to her eyes. There she stood, poor child ! and watched, and watched ! and every creature, when first seen afar off, appeared to wear the peculiar cap of the French peasant girl ; though it always changed, as if by magic, into an Italian head-dress on closer inspection.

Darker and darker—lonely and more lonely grew the street ; and now it was only at intervals of ten or twenty minutes that a stray passenger went rapidly by. Genevieve could bear it no longer, and the bold thought suddenly came into her head, that she would try to find her way home by herself. She had some confused notion of having once before been in this street, and of a certain turn to the left which would take her to the palazza of the count. One very fervent prayer the little girl made to her good mother in Heaven, and then, signing herself with the sign of the cross (as she had often seen Mimi do when anything frightened her), she stepped out from her hiding place, and in fear and trembling pursued her way. For a considerable time she went straight forward, certain that she ought to turn towards the left, yet unable to prevail on herself to enter any of the dark-looking streets which opened in that direction.

Whenever she came to one of them she would

pause and look wistfully down it, in hope of descrying some friendly light to guide her on her path ; but they were all equally lampless and lonely, and so narrow and hedged in on either side by such tall houses, that the fair moon herself had no power to chase away their gloom. Little wonder Genevieve turned from them with a shudder, to wander still further down the street in which she found herself at first, and which, badly lighted though it was, seemed yet a path of brightness in comparison with the others. Still she knew she was moving in the wrong direction ; and this sad thought so thoroughly discouraged her, that it seemed to take away all her strength, making her feel as if she could lie down with pleasure to sleep on the pavement ; in fact she had almost determined to do so, when she stumbled upon another of the narrow streets, which presented the un hoped-for blessing of a lamp burning in the distance. Towards it Genevieve instantly directed her steps ; but she had not got many yards before she repented her rashness. This new street was very long as well as narrow, and she soon became so deeply involved in its shadows that had Manette been but a yard in advance she would not have been visible. True it is, the light which had tempted her so far was still to be seen, but it now appeared very distant indeed to her disenchanted eyes ; and what terrors must she brave in order to reach it ?

“ I am sure it must be the candle in Mimi’s room”, thought the simple-witted child ; “ she has put it there in hopes I might see it ; oh ! if she would but come to me—and so she would if she

only knew her poor little Genevieve was wandering in the cold streets, with no one to help her”.

The idea of her kind old nurse only served to increase the horrors of her present position, and she could not refrain from weeping bitterly ; but Mimi had always taught her to repress her tears, by which means she had acquired better habits of self-command than children of her age usually possess ; so now she soon brushed away the useless drops, and prepared, with all the courage of despair, to make her way to the friendly lamp, cost what it might. Feeling the wall with one hand, therefore, and holding the other before her, as people are ever wont to do in the dark, she began to creep slowly on, although stopping frequently again, with all the blood freezing in her veins, as she fancied herself approaching some object which the darkness concealed from her view. Nothing, however, was really in the way ; and by degrees the light seemed to grow nearer and nearer, brighter and brighter. But, alas ! it now appeared to be much lower than a candle left at Mimi's window could possibly have been ; and when she came closer to it, her despair was at its height, for its feeble rays too plainly showed that her further progress was stopped by a dead wall, and that she must either retrace her steps, or be content to remain where she was during the rest of the night. The very excess of her terror at this idea prevented her screaming aloud—the sound of her own voice would have been terrible in that lonely spot—and her poor eyes wandered in a bewildered manner up and down the unfriendly wall, as if seeking some gleam of hope or comfort from it.

In the course of this scrutiny she perceived that the deceitful lamp was burning before an image placed in a niche in the wall; her extreme disappointment had prevented her making this discovery at first, and something very like joy was fluttering at her heart as she drew near and found herself standing before an image of "the Virgin Mother and the Child", to which some pious person had endeavoured to do honour by the votive offering of a lamp. The figures indeed were rude, and had none of the beauty of those they represented; but such as they were, they told the lost Genevieve that she had a mother in Heaven who watched over her and prayed for her still, a divine Jesus who had died for her, and a Heavenly Father who would never forsake her. The finest statue could have done no more; and, with a recovered sense of safety, she twined her arms around it and wept at its feet, as she had done many an hour of late before the loved Madonna of her vanished home. She was now completely exhausted, and by degrees her sobs became less frequent, her arms relaxed their tight grasp of the statue, she sank lower and lower, until she lay prostrate on the pavement, and five minutes afterwards she was fast asleep—uncared for, indeed, by men, but well guarded by the holy ones in Heaven, beneath whose Earthly images she had sought protection.

When she awoke again, her first feeling was one of extreme terror at the situation in which she found herself, and a flood of tears was the natural consequence.

“Poor little thing, poor little thing”, cried a voice in Italian, close to her ear.

Genevieve looked up through her tears, and by the pale light already glimmering in the skies, she saw a little old man sitting just opposite to her on the pavement, one hand supporting his chin, while the other held the bridle of an ass which stood at his side, looking nearly as ancient and wise as its master. Very much frightened, the little girl rose up as quickly as she could, with the intention, it must be confessed, of running away ; but the old man caught her by the hand which had been engaged in nursing his chin, and cried out in Italian :

“Do not run away quite so fast, my little white dove ; but come here and tell me why you have passed the night on this miserable pavement”.

Unluckily the lost one did not understand one word of Italian ; and the sound of an unknown language so completely destroyed the little courage yet left her, that she could neither cry nor speak, but remained trembling beneath his grasp, very much as the bird to which he likened her flutters in the hand of the snarer.

“What ails thee, what ails thee, thou poor little trembler ? fear not old Filippò ; he would not harm an insect willingly, much less one of God’s most innocent creatures”.

It was no harsh voice which spoke to her thus ; it was no rough hand which drew her towards his bosom. With the quick instinct of childhood, Genevieve felt she had found one who would treat her

kindly ; and, ceasing to struggle, she fixed her eyes upon him, and endeavoured to understand the meaning of his words.

“Why are you here, my child?” he continued, speaking slowly, in hopes she would thus be enabled to comprehend him. “Have you lost your companions, or have you been stolen by bad people from your home?”

It was not difficult to guess that he wished to find out how she had come hither ; so Genevieve began to tell her sad story in French as well as her tears would let her ; but the old man shook his head.

“It is strange”, he muttered. “If I could even find out her name it would be something ; but I fear it is impossible : however, we will try”.

Then he began to repeat the names of every noble Italian family he could remember on the instant ; but Genevieve only opened her eyes wider and wider, without giving any sign of even understanding what it was that he wished to find out.

“Stupid that I am”, said he, breaking off at the very last name he could think of ; “of course, if she is a stranger, her name will not be like these. I will try her with the names of the holy saints ; they belong to every country, and I suppose she will know her own as soon as she hears it”.

And he went on very slowly, watching the countenance of the little girl all the time—

“Francesca—Agnese—Bianca—Ginditta”—

Genevieve listened attentively. She began to imagine he might want to discover her name.

“Maria”—

There was no mistaking this beloved sound. She turned directly, and pointed first to the statue, and then to the sky.

“Good”, said the old man; “she sees what I am about, and I shall soon get at the rest—Beatrice—Columba (that ought to be the name, for she is a very little dove herself)”.

But no; Genevieve remained motionless.

“What, not Columba? Well, then, Nina—Maddalena—Genoveffa”—

He paused again, for the quick ear of the child caught something like the sound of her own name, and she repeated, in a low, mournful tone:

“Genevieve, Genevieve”.

“Genoveffa?” asked the old man.

“Genevieve, Genevieve”, sobbed the child.

“That is her name, then”, he continued, with some self-satisfaction in his manner; “I knew I should soon find it out. But, holy Mother of God, what do I see? Blood—blood! A murder, then, has been committed last night; and, without doubt, this poor child has escaped from the assassins who waylaid her friends”.

As he spoke this rapidly, he examined the folds of Genevieve’s veil, which was indeed spotted with blood in many places; there was also a slight wound in her left temple, caused, as she now well remembered, by a blow received in turning round the sharp corner of a wall during her wanderings the night before; but she could not explain all this to the old man, who continued glancing from the

blood to the wound, and from the wound to the blood, with a mingled expression of fear and horror on his goodnatured-looking features.

“Diamonds also”, he cried, as he caught sight, during this examination, of the cross which she wore round her neck. “Alas! alas! without doubt this poor child has escaped from the bad men who tried to destroy her in order to take whatever she possessed. Unhappy Filippo that I am! never before did such an adventure befall me during the thirty years that I have made pilgrimage to Rome; and if I am found talking to her, I shall be taken up and condemned for a deed of which I am as innocent as herself. I will away while there is yet time; luckily it is still very dark, and no one has passed this way since I have been in the street”.

Muttering all this to himself very rapidly and with many gesticulations, he mounted his donkey as nimbly as he could; but as he did so, he happened to cast another glance upon Genevieve, and there was something in the forlorn, disappointed look with which she watched his preparations for departure, that cut the kind old man to the heart, and brought him once more to her side.

“No, no”, he thought, “I cannot leave her thus; if I am to die for it I cannot forsake her. What is to be done? what is to be done?” he repeated in extreme perplexity. Suddenly a bright thought seemed to cross his mind. “Suppose I take her with me! She has probably lost all her friends, or, if she has not, they will naturally conclude that she also has been murdered, and will never think of

seeking for her again ; if I am found with her in this place I am sure of a better acquaintance with the headsman for my pains ; and, on the other hand, should I abandon her to her fate, she will probably fall into the keeping of strangers, who will ill-treat the child, if they do nothing worse to her”.

No sooner had Filippo arrived at this conclusion, than he caught the astonished Genevieve in his arms, and, wrapping her up in a short cloak, which he took for this purpose from his own shoulders, mounted his donkey, placed her before him, and trotted away as fast as the old animal could be coaxed into going. With all his valour, however, it must be acknowledged that, as he approached the gates of the city, he felt exceedingly nervous, lest he should be questioned concerning the little girl ; but the number of pilgrims at that time of the year was so great, little scrutiny was ever bestowed upon individuals of the class ; and this danger once happily over, Filippo shook the reins triumphantly over his donkey’s head, and the unconscious Genevieve was fairly on her route towards “the city of the lily”, “Florence the beautiful”.

CHAPTER III.

“Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us !”

“AFTER all”, thought the old man, stroking his beard complacently with the hand that held the reins, “the child might have fallen into unkind

hands than those of old Filippo; and when Petronilla's temper fails her, it will be a pleasant thing to have such a dove-like little creature as this to look upon and love". He took a peep at his new treasure as this fancy crossed his mind; and very meek, indeed, was the poor, pale face that met his gaze. Genevieve had fallen into a kind of uneasy slumber; but even sleep could not quite destroy all recollection of her misfortune, for tears were streaming from her closed eye-lids, and more than once she murmured the name of her nurse. "How the child weeps", thought old Filippo; "and what is this Mimi of which she is speaking, I wonder?" A low moan from Genevieve seemed like an answer to his thought. "It is the name of some one she loves, no doubt. She is dreaming of her friends. Alas! my little Genoveffa, you have no one now to love you but old Filippo, and he will cherish you as if you were his own". Genevieve now uttered a succession of low moans, mingled with many broken words, that came like supplications on the ear of the pilgrim. "The creature is asking mercy of the wretches who murdered her friends", thought he; "but, holy Mother of God, how deadly pale she is! she looks as if she were about to die in my arms. Sweet Jesus, grant that she may not be more seriously injured than I fancied at first".

The old man now began to be very seriously alarmed, and in a considerable perplexity as to what was best to be done.

During his pleasant soliloquies he had jogged on many a mile through the open country. No house

or cottage was near in which he could seek shelter for the child, and, if there had been, he would have been afraid to demand it; for he was haunted by the idea that her friends had been murdered, and that, should he linger much longer in the Papal dominions, he would be pursued and condemned for the crime. Simple as a child in all worldly matters was old Filippo; and though he well knew he had given sufficient ground for the accusation by his flight with Genevieve, it never occurred to him that he could have acted in any other manner. "If he had remained with the child where he found her", so he argued over and over again in his own mind, "he never could have proved his own innocence of the crime; and, if he had left her to her fate, she would, most probably, have fallen again into the hands of those from whom he imagined she had made her escape, or of others as likely to ill-treat and destroy her". Under all these conflicting circumstances, he imagined he had done what was best and most prudent, both for the little girl and himself; and the first part of his journey had been made amid many agreeable anticipations of the pleasure he should find in his newly-adopted child; but all this vanished as he watched the expression of pain on her little face; and he urged his animal to very unusual speed, in hopes of reaching some safe place of shelter before the sun should be so high in the heavens as to make it dangerous for her to be exposed to its rays. In order to attain so desirable an object, he was obliged to diverge considerably from the right road; but this appeared of little conse-

quence in comparison with the sufferings of Genevieve ; so he turned his donkey's head, and directed its course towards a spot in the Campagna, where he well remembered he had more than once found a good resting-place for the night. This was an ancient tomb, which had been converted into a kind of dwelling-place by some of the shepherds of the Campagna ; a hole over the door served them for a window, and they had formed a roof of reeds and twigs, now almost hidden from view by the rich masses of honeysuckle clustering over them, and falling in graceful profusion on every side. With all the speed which he could make, it was yet some time before Filippo arrived at this strange abode ; but when he did so, he lifted the weary child from the saddle, and, entering without much ceremony, laid her on a bed of Indian straw, which, to Genevieve's fancy, seemed made on purpose for her reception. To the experienced eye of old Filippo, however, it was very evident that his friends the shepherds were still in possession of their former residence ; a wooden spear stood in one corner, a loose cloak lay in another, and a half-filled pitcher of water, with some broken bread and herbs, completed the tale of its present occupation. "Umph", thought he, as he busied himself in collecting everything likely to increase the comfort of Genevieve's couch ; "they have returned, then, for they were not here when I passed by before Easter. Well, perhaps it is all the better ; I shall be able to get something nicer than water for my little one to drink".

"Mimi, Mimi", cried Genevieve, in a most piti-

ful tone, holding up one of her hands as she spoke. It was the hand she had used to trace her way in the dark, by feeling the outline of the houses ; and both it and the arm were so bruised and swelled by this rough contact with the walls, that she could not move a single finger. Her feet, also, were torn and bleeding ; for she had lost both her shoes in her wanderings, and the broken pavement had cut them in many places. Never was a poor child in a more pitiful condition ; little wonder that she called upon Mimi, who had ever been her best consoler in the hour of pain. Poor old Filippo, as kind-hearted as any woman, wrung his hands in utter dismay as he examined the injuries she had received, and, still full of the idea that she had escaped from the hands of assassins, indignantly exclaimed : “ The wretches ! they must have tried to torture as well as to kill her. That there should be men in all Italy who could so use a poor infant ! ” Then, telling Genevieve to remain where she was (a very useless precaution, it must be acknowledged, since she could neither stir from the spot, nor understand what he said to her), he vanished from the hut, but returned in a short time with a flask of goat’s milk, which he had luckily been able to procure from his friends the shepherds. A portion of this he mixed with water, to bathe the feet and hand of the little girl, after which he produced a store of clean linen rags from his wallet, and bound up the wounds as carefully and tenderly as Mimi herself could have done. Genevieve felt so much refreshed by this operation that she began to re-

member, for the first time, the disagreeable fact of her having had no breakfast; but her new attendant, who seemed able to anticipate all her wishes, dived his hand once more into the wallet, and brought forth a loaf of dry bread and some roasted chestnuts from its secret recesses; then, pouring the remainder of the milk into a wooden drinking cup, he set these homely provisions before her, and, with many a loving word of encouragement, pressed her to eat. To say the truth, Genevieve did not require much urging, for she was by this time inconveniently hungry; and Filippo sat down beside her, and watched every morsel she carried to her mouth with such a look of pleasure on his old face, that, had she been the most suspicious child in the world, instead of the most confiding, it would still have been impossible for her to have doubted the kindness of his intentions. “Eat, my little lady”, he continued to say every now and then; “eat, and grow strong, for we have a long journey before us. How are the chestnuts? Alas! I fear you are not accustomed to this plain food. Stay, I will peel you another”—and then he laughed so merrily, and made so many grotesque expressions of delight at her good appetite, that Genevieve caught the infection, and in pure sympathy laughed along with him. This proof of fearlessness enchanted him beyond measure; he actually danced round the hut in his joy, and then, kneeling down by her low resting place, fairly caught her little hand and covered it with kisses. It was impossible to resist this genuine outpouring of his kind old heart. Genevieve took

one of his withered hands in her own unwounded one, and said, in a tone half of uncertainty, half of entreaty: "Then you *will* show me the way back to Mimi; will you not?" "Yes, yes, my little darling", cried Filippo, not in the least understanding what she really meant, but imagining from her tone of voice that she was making him some kind of petition; "I will take you to my own fair Florence, and you shall be as happy as a little princess—that is to say, if old Petronilla does not take it into her head to dislike you", he added, in rather a doleful tone, as he remembered that his wife was unluckily of a temper not much calculated to promote the little girl's comfort. "Then, *cannot* you take me back to Mimi?" repeated Genevieve, who perceived in a moment the altered expression of the old man's face, though without understanding the cause. "*Cannot* you take me back to Mimi?" she added, still more earnestly, twisting her delicate little fingers through his, and pressing them to her lips, as if she hoped to move him to do her will by her childish caresses. "My poor little lost one", said Filippo, sadly, "I know not what you want, nor who you ask for; but this I know, that old Filippo will love you all the better, because he believes there is no one left upon Earth to love you besides. And now go to sleep, my precious dove, for you must needs be weary after the terrors of last night". He pressed the child gently down towards her pillow as he spoke, and, after throwing a loose cloak over her, left the hut. By this Genevieve understood that he wished her to sleep; therefore, with the

simple obedience which she had ever practised towards Mimi, she crossed her little arms over her bosom, and, murmuring the precious names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, soon fell into a refreshing slumber. The sun was sinking far towards the west before the old man could find it in his heart to disturb her again; but when he did so at last, she obeyed his summons with great alacrity, being still under the impression that he was going to take her to Mimi. While she was sleeping, he had arranged a kind of pillion for her, so that she would be able to travel a great deal more comfortably than she had done in the morning; and as soon as he had placed her securely in it, he gathered a great bunch of honeysuckle, and put it into her hand. Genevieve was delighted with the sweet offering, which she immediately began to twine into a wreath for her Madonna. Happily the steady jogtrot of the donkey did not disturb this occupation; old Filippo good-naturedly held the flowers, and handed them to her just as she wanted them, one by one, while, sometimes in French, and sometimes by signs, she tried to make him understand the purpose for which it was intended. Perhaps, in some degree, she succeeded in doing so, for as soon as the wreath was finished, he hung it very carefully from the pillion, so as to prevent its being crushed; and the weary child being thus satisfied as to its safety, laid her head very confidently on his bosom, and once more fell fast asleep, nor did she awaken again until the donkey halted at a cottage, where Filippo asked and obtained a shelter for the night. The kind-

hearted woman to whom it belonged took a great fancy to Genevieve, and willingly consented to dress her wounded feet, and to place her in the most comfortable bed which she had to offer. She imagined her to be the old man's grand-daughter, and remonstrated very seriously with him on the folly of taking so young a child as the companion of his pilgrimage. To say the truth, Filippo was rather glad of her mistake ; so he let her run on without contradiction, only saying every now and then : "Well, well ; we are here now, and all we can do is to get back again as fast as we can. Do you think her poor little feet will soon heal up ?"

"Heal up", answered the woman ; "yes, if you will remain here, I will undertake to have her well in a week. My mother left me a receipt that is wonderful for green wounds".

"A week", repeated Filippo, in great consternation. "No, my friend, it is impossible I can remain here a week".

"And, pray, why impossible ?" said the woman, with some impatience. "I should think it far more impossible to travel with a child in such a condition".

"My friend", said the old man, with a sort of droll gravity in his voice and manner, "it is impossible, because, besides another very serious reason (he thought of the chance of being pursued), I have a wife at home who will certainly come and seek me if I do not go back very speedily to her".

"Ah ! well", replied his hostess, rather shaken in her argument by this frank admission ; "but, then, if she be ever so unreasonable, she must love her

own grandchild, and she surely would not wish her to travel with her little feet and legs so swelled—she cannot even move them without pain”.

Filippo was touched by this account of the little girl's sufferings, and he repeated, sadly enough : “ Genoveffa is so patient. Poor little Genoveffa ! ”

“ Patient ! aye, that she is ”, replied the woman. “ She never said a word all the time I was dressing her wounds and taking out the gravel which had got into them and was making them fester ; and when I asked her if she felt better, she smiled so sweetly, and murmured something or other—I could not make out exactly what, for I suppose she was too sleepy to speak very plain ; and after I had put her into bed, nothing would content her but she must get out of it again to say her prayers, I believe, for she knelt down, and crossed her arms on her bosom, and looked just like such a little angel as one sees in a picture ; but I could not understand her prayers any more than her talk, though she said them slowly and distinctly enough ; and to my mind they were not in Italian, or even in Latin ”.

“ Genoveffa does not speak Italian ”, answered Filippo, who saw the necessity of making some explanation. “ Her parents lived in a foreign land, and they are both dead, I believe. That is why she is coming to live with me ”.

“ Ah ! poor little thing. No wonder I could not make out her little sayings. And pray, Master Pilgrim, from what part of Italy do you come yourself, if one may venture to ask the question ? ”

“ I live not far from Florence, and I am a shoemaker by trade ”.

“Then you are a poor man”, replied his companion. “I should have thought you a better off sort of pilgrim from your travelling on a donkey”.

“I have never missed an Easter at Rome for these thirty years, and have hitherto always made the pilgrimage on foot; but I have grown old and infirm now, so this year a kind friend would lend me an ass for the journey. He offered a pony, for he is rich as well as generous, but I preferred the other animal, as it was in such fashion Mary travelled to Bethlehem, and Jesus Himself entered Jerusalem. And now, my kind hostess, I pray you to let me lie down somewhere for the night, for I am almost as weary as my little Genoveffa”.

“I have given the only bed which there is in the house to your grandchild; but you are welcome to lie down where you are, if you think you can manage to get some rest on the floor”.

“A pilgrim has no right to be particular”, replied Filippo. “I will roll my old cloak up for a pillow, and I have no doubt I shall sleep soundly enough. But what is to become of you if you have given my Genoveffa your bed?”

“Oh! I can easily lie down beside her; but I mean first to go out and gather some herbs for her wounded feet. Since you will go, you must take them with you, and, wherever you stop for the night, you can make them into a poultice, and place it on the wounds. They will be healed in a week if you follow this plan”.

“Thank you—thank you”, said the old man, gratefully. “You may be sure I will not neglect

it, for it is a grievous thing to see a young child suffer”.

The good woman nodded to the pilgrim, and, taking a little basket, went out to gather her herbs. The moon was so bright she had no difficulty in finding as many as she wanted; but afterwards it took so long a time to prepare them properly for use, that day was breaking, and Filippo astir, before she had quite completed her task. Genevieve was much refreshed by her long night's rest, though her feet were too much swelled to permit of her walking; so Filippo himself took her in his arms, and placed her in the pillion, and, after bidding a grateful farewell to their hostess, they once more pursued their journey together. It proved a much longer one than Genevieve, who fancied she was going back to her old home, expected. At first she was disappointed, and wept at the end of every day's wandering, to find no Mimi to greet her on her arrival. But, at last she gave up this idea, and by degrees became conscious that she was leading a much happier kind of life than during the dismal months which she had spent shut up in her nursery at Rome. It is true she could not understand one word out of twenty of the many endearing expressions which old Filippo addressed to her; but she felt instinctively that he loved her almost as well as Mimi had done, and with the unhesitating confidence of childhood, she loved him in return, and abandoned herself to his care without a thought of distrust.

How, indeed, could it be otherwise, when he was ever on the watch to comfort or to please her? At

night, it was with something of a mother's love that he cared for her wounded feet, smoothed down her pillow, and laid his hand on her head to bless her ; and in the daytime time he gathered the bright wild flowers for her as they went along—chose out the most shady spots, to shelter her from the noon-tide sun ; and when she was weary, sang her to sleep on his bosom, with the same sweet hymns which had cradled his own childhood. It was a pretty sight to see them thus together, and it would have been hard to say which of the two had the most child-like, loving heart—the fair-haired little one, or the old man with his hoary locks.

Sometimes Genevieve said her prayers to him, as she had been used to do to Mimi. Sometimes she would lay down beside him, and, pointing to the flowers, the trees, the Earth, the Heavens, would learn their Italian names, and repeat them slowly after him over and over again, until she had caught the right pronounciation. In this way she soon began to understand something of the language, and thus, partly by words, and partly by signs, she and her companion got on merrily together. One bright, sun-shiny day they took refuge from the heat in a little grove of trees, where, according to his usual custom, Filippo looked out for a pleasant resting-place for his little charge, and he was not long in finding one so much to her liking that she actually clapped her hands with delight as soon as she saw it. It was, indeed, a very pretty spot, and did great credit to Filippo's taste. A slight opening in the trees let in just enough air and sun-

shine to induce a thousand little wild flowers to blossom in the turf; while an image of the Madonna seemed to keep watch and ward over the waters of a fountain which welled up slowly at her feet.

“It is the Mother and the Child—the Mother and the Child”, said Genevieve, in French, and then, kneeling down and folding her hands together, she said her little prayer of “My most dear mother, beg of your Divine Son to give me His blessing, and please to give me yours likewise”. Filippo watched her with delight; and as soon as she saw him at her side, she made him kneel down and pray with her. “It is my mother”, she said, in broken Italian; “my mother and the little Jesus”. “Your mother in Heaven, I suppose you mean, my child”, corrected Filippo. “No”, persisted Genevieve, “Mary is all the mother I have upon Earth, as well as in Heaven: Mimi told me so”.

“Ah, then, you are an orphan, I suppose, unless, indeed, perhaps, your father is alive?”

“No”, said Genevieve, gravely, shaking her head, “I have no father either, excepting always my good Father in Heaven. But, perhaps you are going to be my father now, and then I shall have one on Earth as well as in Heaven”.

Almost all this long speech was uttered in French: but Filippo guessed her meaning by the action of her eye and hands, and by the few Italian words with which it was interspersed, and he answered, as it appeared, very much to the point.

“No, Genoveffa, I am going to be your grandfather, so you must always call me Grandfather Filippo”.

“Grandfather Filippo ! Grandfather Filippo !” repeated the little girl, over and over again, as she always did whenever she was trying to acquire a new word.

“Grandfather Filippo”, repeated the old man. “Now you say it as nicely as if you had been born in Florence”.

“You my grandfather ?” asked Genevieve, with an inquiring glance into Filippo’s eyes.

“Yes, yes”, cried he. “And I will love you dearly, and you will love me. Will you not, my little Genoveffa ?”

“Grandfather Filippo and Mimi”, said Genevieve, rather guessing at the old man’s meaning, than understanding his Italian.

“Mimi ! Who is Mimi, my pretty little dove ?”

Genevieve tried to make him understand ; but as she was obliged to do this in French, Filippo was not much the wiser for the explanation ; so, shaking his old head in despair, he went off and gathered her a bunch of wild flowers, which she was very happily employed in twining into a wreath, when startled by a rustling noise in the brushwood at her side. The little girl screamed, and flew for protection to Filippo, who was sadly puzzled to guess the cause of her terror ; but as she kept pointing to the bushes, he fancied she had seen some animal lurking among them ; therefore, making her sit down just where she was, he approached the copsewood, and began to examine it himself. Presently he cried out, “Genoveffa—Genoveffa” ; but Genevieve was much too terrified to venture again from her safe

resting-place, and she was still trembling from head to foot when he returned, holding something in one hand, while he screened it from her sight with the other. It was alive, for a bright eye was gleaming from betwixt his fingers; and by degrees he opened them wider and wider, until she saw the pretty feathers of a bird, which lay quite still and panting with fear, as it glanced first at one of its ensnarers, and then at the other.

“It is more frightened than you were just now, my Genoveffa. See, it is a young dove, which has fallen from its mother’s nest, and broken its wing, poor little thing”.

“Poor little thing—poor little thing”, echoed Genevieve in Italian; for she had not been long in Filippo’s company without discovering that this was one of his especial words of endearment, and she used it now to the wounded dove with much the same sort of feeling as he had done in addressing it to herself.

“Dying—dead?” asked Genevieve in French.

“No, not dying or dead either”, said Filippo, who understood her meaning, because she pointed to Heaven—a sign she often made use of to express her idea that her father and mother were no longer alive. “Not dying or dead. See, look at its bright eyes; and it can hop about, though its broken wing will always prevent it from flying. Go and sit down there”, he added, pointing to the Madonna, “and I will give it to you to pet and to play with in your own little hands”. Genevieve obeyed the direction of his finger, and as soon as

she was seated, Filippo placed the dove in her lap, and showed her how to feed it with a little bread dipt into water. "We will take it with us, and nurse it until it is quite well and strong again ; shall we not, Genoveffa?" And then old Filippo set to work with as much good will as though he had been a child himself, and soon produced the result of his labours to the enchanted Genevieve, in the shape of a kind of nest, which he had woven very ingeniously out of the loose twigs that were growing around him. This was afterwards to be filled with moss and soft grass, and Genevieve would add a quantity of sweet violets, which she gathered herself, notwithstanding Filippo's earnest assurance that the dove did not care in the least about them. She could neither understand this fact in itself, nor the Italian in which it was uttered ; so the dove was laid gently down upon its flowery bed, and by placing a few bent twigs across the nest, Filippo succeeded both in making it more completely a prisoner, and in preventing it doing itself any further injury by the terrified fluttering of its wings.

"What will Petronilla say to all this?" thought Filippo, as he placed Genevieve and her treasure once more on the old donkey. "I bring home a child, and the child brings home a bird. I have a good mind to leave the dove in the wood where I found it". But he had not the heart to put this resolve into execution ; and a second glance at Genevieve's delighted little face, as she bent down to kiss the poor dove through the bars of its prison, made him resolve never to despoil her of her favour-

ite, let Petronilla be as cross as she would. This was the last of their happy days' wanderings together. That evening they saw the setting sun shine upon the towers and churches of the fair city of Florence; but instead of pursuing the straight road thither, Filippo turned into a by-path, and a few yards in this new direction brought him to his cottage. It is true he was only a poor shoemaker, but he certainly was intended for a gardener; for he loved flowers almost as much as Genevieve did, and the little plot of ground in front of his house was cultivated with the minutest care, and bright in the fairest and most fragrant blossoms of the land. Genevieve gazed around her with the longing of a child to gather all that it beholds, and then she glanced up at a tall acacia tree, which threw its branches over the cottage, imparting to it, by its delicate bloom and graceful foliage, a charm it very possibly might not have possessed without it. Filippo watched the expression of her face, and he shook the tree until long wreaths of the snowy flowers came tumbling thick upon her, while she held up one hand to catch them as they fell, and with the other kept fast hold of her dove's nest, making the very prettiest little picture in the world.

Filippo could not help wishing that his cross, old Petronilla could have seen her at that moment; but wishing was all in vain, for she happened that day to be in one of her very worst humours, and though she knew her husband was at the door, she would not condescend to come out to greet him. From this the poor man augured ill for Genevieve's recep-

tion. However, he resolved to go in and carry matters with a very high hand; so taking the little girl into his arms, and (it must be confessed, in spite of his brave resolutions) devoutly wishing he had left her dove in its native forest, he ventured at last into the awful presence of his wife. Petronilla was sitting with her face opposite the door; and though of course, from her position, she could not avoid seeing him enter, she pretended not to have done so, but went on quite innocently stitching an old shoe, which had been confided to her careful mending in the absence of the shoemaker. Filippo was pretty well accustomed to this sort of conduct, and had long ago adopted the wise plan of never appearing to notice it; therefore, after placing Genevieve on a seat, he went up at once to his wife, and greeted her with a hearty kiss.

“Oh, there you are at last”, said Petronilla, stitching away with more energy than ever. “And, pray, where have you been wool-gathering now, if one may venture to ask you? It is nearly three weeks since the time at which you ought to have been back; and here have I been all this time doing your work, and losing my health and my eye-sight, mending old shoes and making new ones, while you, good-for-nothing as you are, have been amusing yourself wandering over the world, forsooth”.

Genevieve did not understand a word of all this; but she was terrified by the raised voice and flashing eyes of Petronilla. Even poor Filippo seemed to have lost all his courage in a moment, and, glancing at the little girl, he said, in rather a hesi-

tating voice : " I could not travel fast because of my little companion".

" Oh, you had a companion, had you?" said Petronilla, who had been aware of the presence of Genevieve from the instant of her entrance, but who was determined not to notice her in order to annoy her husband. " Never a pilgrimage do you make without bringing back some filthy brute or other to dirty the house and destroy the garden".

" But this is not a filthy brute", urged Filippo ; " it is an innocent child, whom I beg you to receive kindly, if not for my sake, at least for the sake of the Divine Child, Jesus".

" An ape or a monkey most likely", Petronilla went on, just as if she had not heard his explanation. " Last year it was a cat; the year before it was a squirrel".

" You acknowledged you found the cat useful at last; and you were fond of the squirrel, it had such pretty ways about it", said Filippo, trying to laugh off his wife's ill humour.

" Pretty ways indeed ! Well, it hanged itself at last in its own chain ; that is one comfort at any rate, and I hope your next favourite will have no better luck", Petronilla concluded, for the first time darting a glance at Genevieve, which would have made her tremble could she have seen it ; but happily Filippo was at that moment between her and the black eyes of his wife ; otherwise she might not, perhaps, have submitted as quietly as she did to his wishes, when he led her towards the latter, hoping by this means to terminate the scene.

“Humph; there is a bird also”, said Petronilla, looking angrily both at the child and the dove. “It was not enough that you bring me home a beggar’s brat to take care of, but the pet must have a pet—must it? Well, we shall see, we shall see”; and she began to work at her shoe more vehemently than ever.

“It is a dove”, said the trembling Genevieve, in the very best Italian she could master, and holding up her treasure, as if the very fact of possessing such a prize would more than atone for her own unwelcome intrusion. “A pretty little dove—poor little thing, poor little thing”, she repeated, much as a caged starling says over and over again the solitary sentence which it lost its liberty to learn.

“Poor little thing, indeed”, echoed Petronilla. “I would like to wring the necks off both your pretty little things; that I can tell you, Master Filippo; and I have a good mind to do it for one of them”, she added, glancing portentously at the fluttering bird.

Filippo was certainly rather afraid of his wife; but the very idea of her using violence, or giving sorrow to the gentle child he had adopted as his own, roused all the brave blood in his veins, and he actually shook his finger at her as he exclaimed: “And let me tell you, Petronilla, that if you dare to hurt a hair of that child’s head—ay, or to take one feather from her dove, I—I—” He paused, and continued in a calmer but still very resolute tone: “I will never speak to you again as long as I live. Now, go and get us some supper, and remember that for once in my life I will be obeyed”.

Perhaps it was absolute astonishment at this new tone in her gentle old Filippo that made his wife, contrary to her usual custom, rise to do his bidding at once. The meal passed off in sorrowful silence, for she was too sulky and Filippo too indignant to speak; and as soon as it was over, he took up the implements of his trade, and carried Genevieve into the garden, where he set to work mending an almost worn-out shoe, while the little girl made a bed of flowers for her dove, and almost forgot the scolding tongue of Petronilla in this her first happy evening under the beautiful acacia.

CHAPTER IV.

"Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us".

GENEVIEVE's feet swelled so much after her long journey that for many weeks she was quite unable to walk; and as Petronilla obstinately refused to assist her, she used every morning to dress herself as well as she could, and then lie down again on her little bed, there to wait quietly until Filippo's return from the early mass, when he always carried her at once to his favourite resting-place in the garden, in order to get her out of the way of his scolding wife. Before he made his appearance, however, Genevieve had a great deal to endure from Petronilla's tongue—for the language of temper is, alas! universal—and if she did not understand the abuse so lavishly poured out upon her, there was at least no mistaking the meaning of the

flashing eyes and menacing gestures by which it was accompanied. The patient child never uttered a complaint in return. She contented herself with pressing her dove yet more closely to her bosom, in order to prevent its flutterings from increasing the anger of her tormentor; and it was only by the eagerness with which she watched for the coming of old Filippo that any one could have guessed how much she had to suffer in his absence. As soon as ever she heard his voice in the garden, or his footsteps at the door, her eyes would brighten and her colour rise. One word of kindness from him put to flight all the terrors which his cross wife had inspired; and the rest of the day was spent in a kind of busy idleness under the shadow of the acacia. Sometimes she fed and tamed her dove, which already began to know her, and to answer to her call of "Mimi, Mimi"; for, faithful to old recollections, Genevieve had given the name of her beloved nurse to her new favourite. Sometimes she watched the old shoemaker at his work, carrying on a kind of disjointed chat with him, half in French and half in Italian; but every day there was less of the former language and more of the latter; and she had not been many weeks longer under his roof before she was able to tell him nearly as much of her former history as she was conscious of herself.

All that he heard left Filippo little reason to regret the step he had taken in adopting her for his own. It was very evident to him that the persons with whom she had been living were not her relatives, and that, if not with cruelty, they had at least

treated her with neglect; he even felt much inclined to doubt Mimi's claims to the affection with which she was regarded; for as Genevieve knew little or nothing of the severe illness of the countess, she could not in any way account for the desertion of her nurse, though she often dwelt very pathetically on the terror she experienced during her absence. In this, as we know, Filippo wronged the good woman most grievously; but it was a very natural conclusion to come to; so he used to shake his old head very wisely, and say to himself: "I am glad I took her. Better a poor man's love than a proud man's pity. Doubtless she is some orphan, adopted in haste and forgotten at leisure; and it is a flower of the fields and not of the garden", he continued, stealing a glance at his protegee as she lay listlessly watching the shadows of the acacia tree dancing in the sunshine, "and looks so blythe and happy in a cottage, that it would surely have withered in the slavery of a palace".

"Genoveffa, my child", he said aloud, "do you not think your feet are well enough to try on this little pair of shoes, which I have made on purpose for you? see, they are of undyed leather, for I guess by your white veil and dress that you have been consecrated to Mary, and I would not rob her of such a precious offering for the world".

The shoes were tried on, and answered perfectly well, and Genevieve walked twice round the garden without any inconvenience.

Filippo was delighted. "That is brave, that is brave; I knew they were just your fit; and now

you are able to walk, I will take you to church to-morrow morning, Genoveffa”.

“Yes”, said the child ; “and I will thank my good Father in Heaven for having sent Grandfather Filippo to take care of me on Earth, and I will thank Mary too”, she added, with much feeling ; “for well I know she spoke for me to her little Jesus on that weary night when she saw me crying and trembling beneath her image”.

“To be sure she did, Genoveffa ; so good a mother could never see her little one in distress without trying to assist it”.

“I will pray also for poor Petronilla”, said the child, in a musing tone, “that she may learn to love the little Jesus”.

“O Genoveffa, she loves Him already ; she could not choose but love the little Jesus”.

“No”, persisted Genevieve, “she does not love Him ; if she did, she would be kind to my little dove”.

“I should rather have said to yourself, Genoveffa. Our good God loves an innocent child so well”.

“But He also loves the little dove. Mimi told me all about it”, said the child ; “for Mary brought Him a gift of doves when she wanted Him to give her back her little Jesus”.

“Ah ! that was when she presented Him in the Temple”, replied Filippo.

“And when He was baptized a dove spread its soft wings over His head”, Genevieve continued, with a look as if she were trying to recall some long-forgotten conversation to her memory.

“Yes”, said Filippo, “the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a dove. Why, Mimi must have been a good woman, after all, or she could never have taught the child so well”, he continued, speaking as if to himself.

“There was a great deal more”, murmured Genevieve, who had not heard the last part of Filippo’s speech, “only I forget; but one thing I know, she said the dove was very like to Jesus”.

“Quite right”, observed the old man, “for a very dove in heart was the meek and humble Jesus”.

“But there was something else”, Genevieve went on, with a puzzled look—“Oh! I remember now; Jesus was kind to all, and the dove also is kind and gentle”.

“As gentle as yourself, my Genoveffa”, said Filippo, with a smile; “but how do you know it is so kind?”

“I know it very well”, cried Genevieve, triumphantly, “for Mimi told me it was the good little dove brought a green branch to Noah, when the naughty raven flew away, and left him all alone upon the stormy waters”.

“In that indeed was the dove most like to Jesus”, the old man observed, with deep feeling in his voice; “for what is His cross but the branch of grace and salvation which He holds out to us, to save us from perishing amid the dangers of this world? Mimi was certainly a good woman; I cannot imagine how she could have come to be so neglectful of this dear child”, he added, in an undertone, for he did not wish Genevieve to hear him.

“I shall not be like the little Jesus any more

now", said Genevieve, rather sorrowfully, looking down upon her new shoes.

"And why not, my Genoveffa? What is to prevent you trying to be like Him to-day or to-morrow, as well as yesterday or the day before?"

"I should always try to be like Him as far as I could—I know that very well, Grandfather Filippo—but I was thinking that I shall not be so very like Him now as I was when my feet were sore; for then I used always to think of all that Mimi often said to me about His having been footsore and weary coming through the desert when He was quite a little child; and how the dear old St. Joseph used to fetch water from a well wherever he could find one; and how Mary used to bathe His feet, and to love Him so tenderly all the while".

Filippo did not quite understand this speech, as it was almost entirely uttered in French; yet he guessed enough of it to be able to answer pretty nearly to the point.

"Well, Genoveffa, mia, at any rate, you can now go and visit the little Jesus in His churches, and that will be better even than sitting here looking at your swelled feet and thinking about Him. Will it not?"

"Much better", cried Genevieve, joyfully; "shall we go directly, Grandfather Filippo?"

"Well, I don't know why we should not, my Genoveffa. What church will you go to first?"

"To the Santa Maria", she answered, without hesitation, remembering the name of the church to which Manette had sometimes taken her at Rome.

"Santa Maria del Fiore?" replied the old man, shaking his head. "That is a far way for you to

walk, my child ; but stay a moment", he added, seeing the look of disappointment on Genevieve's face, "I have got a pair of new shoes to bring to old Lucia, and perhaps she will lend me her husband's donkey, as she has done many a time before when I wanted to go into Florence".

Grandfather Filippo took up a parcel of shoes as he spoke, and left the garden, to which he soon returned with the welcome intelligence that the good old Lucia had placed the donkey quite at his disposal for the rest of the day.

"But what shall I do with Mimi?" said Genevieve, in rather a despairing tone of voice, as she looked at her dove, and remembered how Petronilla only that very morning had threatened to wring off its neck if ever she could lay her hands upon it in Filippo's absence. "I cannot take it with me to visit the little Jesus, and Petronilla will certainly kill it if she finds it here while we are away".

"Oh, there is no danger", said Filippo, laughing ; "I will hang the cage up to a branch of the tree, and Petronilla will never think of hurting it, for she always threatens a good deal more than she is willing to do. Poor old soul, there is no great harm in her, though she does talk so big".

By the time he had finished this speech, the dove's cage was hung up securely on the sunshiny side of the acacia ; and then mounting the little girl on the donkey, Filippo led it by the bridle, and never suffered the lazy old animal to pause for a moment, until it halted near the gates of the Santa Maria del Fiore.

Genevieve's first exclamation, on entering the

building, was one of delight ; the marble pavement had caught her eye ; to her simple thoughts it was covered with real flowers—red lilies and white, black lilies and gray—mingled together in graceful profusion, and making it a carpet almost too beautiful for any, save the foot of an angel, to tread upon.

“ Flowers ! beautiful flowers ! ” she cried aloud, quite forgetting the sacred place in which she was, and clapping her hands, as she always did when anything particularly pleased her. But old Filippo shook his head, and put his finger to his lips ; and poor Genevieve, blushing scarlet at the reproof, knelt down quietly beside him ; yet still, for a little time, her eyes would turn towards the wonderful lilies at her feet, in doubt and wonder as to whether they were real ; and if they were real, *how* they ever could have been brought there in such quantities, and where the black and the gray ones *could* possibly have been gathered ; never had she looked upon such strange flowers before. Just then her guardian-angel seemed to whisper in her ear—“ Did you visit Santa Maria only to gaze upon her lilies ? ” Genevieve felt she was not doing what was right or good, and she turned to look at old Filippo. He did not observe her, however ; for his rosary was in his hand, and his eyes were fixed upon the tabernacle where Jesus dwelt. “ He looks so pleased ”, thought Genevieve, “ he must be very happy talking to Mary and the little Jesus. I will try and pray to them as he does ”. So, resolutely closing her eyes, in order the more completely to shut out the flowery temptation, Genevieve drew

out a little pair of white beads from her bosom, and said the Joyful Mysteries, which had more connection with the sweet infant Jesus of her imagination than any of the others.

And who shall say she was not rewarded for her good resolution? Who shall doubt that Jesus spoke very lovingly to the heart of this little one, who for His love had turned it from all vain and foolish thoughts, in order to fix it upon Him? None could say it—none could doubt it—had they seen Genevieve as she rose from her prayers: she looked and felt as happy as a little angel. At the threshold, however, she paused one moment to look at the lilies which had so bewildered her fancy.

“Real, real?” she asked Filippo, pointing to the marble; for not being very certain of her Italian, she often spoke in monosyllables. “Can I pick them up? No; I know I cannot”, she added, seeing him laughing; “but they look just as if I could; don’t they, grandfather?”

“Yes”, said the old man, as he placed her once more on the donkey, and turned its head towards home, “it always looks to me as if Madonna Mary had rained down a whole shower of lilies on her favourite church”.

“And that is why it is called Santa Maria del Fiore, I suppose”, said Genevieve; “but who put all those beautiful lilies on the pavement?”

“I know not”, answered Filippo; “but it must have been some one who loved well ‘the beauty of God’s house and the place where His glory dwelleth’; some one to whom it, perhaps, occurred that such

flowers were the most fitting ornament of a church dedicated to her who was the true lily of the human race—our sweet and sinless Madonna Mary”.

“Then Madonna Mary loves flowers? Does she not, Grandfather Filippo?”

“I think she must have done so when she walked upon Earth, my child; for surely she loved all the beautiful works of God, even for the sake of Him who made them”.

“And do you think she would like *me* to bring her some flowers, Grandfather Filippo?” said Genevieve, in a very confidential and half-hesitating voice.

“I think she would like it, my Genoveffa, if not for the flowers, at least for the sake of the loving little heart that brings them”.

“And may I bring her some to-morrow, Grandfather Filippo? May I bring her some my own self out of the garden?” cried Genevieve, trembling with eagerness as she made such a daring request.

“To be sure you may, my child, if you like it”.

“We must make haste and get home then, or it will be too late to gather them to-night; won’t it, Grandfather Filippo? And what shall I bring her? there are still some acacia blossoms left, and there are plenty of roses, and geraniums, and myrtle, and lilies; but I think Madonna Mary has got lilies enough in her church already. Has not she?” said Genevieve, checking herself in her rapid enumeration of all the treasures in old Filippo’s garden.

“But they are not real flowers, and they have no scent. I think you may venture to bring her your

lilies, my Genoveffa", the old man answered with a smile.

"I would bring the dove, too, if I thought she would like it", said Genevieve, quickly, as if she was rather afraid of her own resolution.

"No, Genoveffa mia. Keep the dove: Madonna Mary does not want it. Keep it, and, when you look upon it, let it often remind you of her; for simple as a dove was the heart of Mary, and simple as doves are the hearts of those whom Jesus best loves and cherishes on Earth".

Perhaps old Filippo was himself one of the guileless beings he described; for earthly wisdom had no share in his composition, and his heart was full of the milk of human kindness, which poured itself out upon all creatures, from the meanest insect that crawled the Earth to his little Genoveffa—the last and most cherished of his family of pets, which, to say the truth, was nearly as numerous and incongruous as Petronilla had represented them.

"We must make haste, or we shall not be able to see the flowers", said Genevieve, giving a sudden twitch to the donkey's rein. Just as she did so, the animal swerved aside, and the terrified child screamed at beholding a tall, black figure standing in the path before her, and looking, in the dim twilight, more like a creature risen from the dead, than any living thing she had ever set her eyes upon before. If she did not instantly jump off the donkey, and run away as fast as she could, it was only because she felt it would be safer to remain under the protection of Filippo; so she clung to his arm,

while he trembled excessively, at first she imagined with fear—which, of course, added greatly to her own—but, at last, to her infinite astonishment, she perceived he was only suffering under an immoderate fit of laughter.

“Why, *Genoveffa mia*—*Genoveffa mia*”, said he, as soon as he could speak, “did you never see a brother of the *Misericordia* before? Come hither, my friend”, he added, addressing the motionless form before him, “and assure this foolish child that you are neither a robber nor a spirit, but one who loves *Madonna Mary* almost as well as she does herself”.

In obedience to this request the black figure approached, but, notwithstanding her grandfather’s assurance of safety, it was with difficulty Genevieve suppressed a second scream as the long arm was once more stretched towards her, and she perceived neither face nor features, both being completely concealed beneath a dark-coloured capuce.

“My little one has no money, holy brother, but here is something which I give you in her name”, said Filippo, putting a small coin into the open hand, which instantly closed upon it; and then both hand and arm dropped down, and were lost among the folds of the sombre garment, while the figure itself moved swiftly away. Genevieve breathed more freely as it vanished from her sight, and in a few minutes afterwards she ventured to say—

“What is it, Grandfather Filippo? What is it? I never saw anything so dreadful in my life before. It has neither head nor face”.

“It has both head, and face, and heart too”,

said old Filippo. "Aye, perhaps it is even the heart of a prince which is beating beneath that sombre garment".

"A prince! Is that a prince?" asked Genevieve, who had some vague idea that princes were awful people, but who had never supposed them to be of so dismal an appearance.

"For anything I know it may have been the Grand Duke himself", said Filippo, musing.

"If all princes are like that", said Genevieve, "I am sure I hope I shall never meet another again as long as I live. Even the poor old donkey was as much frightened as I was; was not it, Grandfather Filippo? It started quite across the road, and it was partly that which made me scream the first time".

"Because it is a donkey", said Filippo, smiling. "But it is plain you were not born in Tuscany, my child, or you would not have been so startled at meeting with a brother of the Misericordia".

"Then he is not a prince", said Genevieve, rather relieved by this piece of intelligence.

"He is far better than a prince", answered Filippo, with energy. "He is a man who has devoted himself to one of the highest and holiest works of charity which God ever inspired into the hearts of the most favoured of his servants. None better than the brothers of the Misericordia may hope to hear from the lips of their Redeemer those words of comfort—'For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; a stranger, and you took me in; sick, and you visited me; in prison, and you came to me. Come,

blessed of my Father, and receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'".

"But why do they make themselves look so terrible, with their faces hidden under that gloomy hood?" asked Genevieve. "I should not have been so frightened if he had looked like other people".

"They conceal themselves beneath those dismal robes, my child, in order that while they go about doing good to all, they may avoid the praise which ever waits upon such actions. The brethren of the Misericordia would not have the left hand to know what the right hand is doing; therefore, they conceal themselves not only from the worldly, but often even from each other; and so perfectly do they carry out this heaven-born humility, that numbers of them live and die without knowing who or how many were united with them in their life of labour and of love".

"Do they visit the prisons, grandfather, and see the poor people who are punished in those gloomy places?"

"That is one of their duties, my child; and with those who are condemned to die they remain constantly in prayer".

"I should not like that at all", said Genevieve, shaking her head. "It must be very—very sad".

"These good men, Genoveffa, do not consult their own feelings in their actions, but rather consider what may be pleasing to God and useful to their fellow-creatures. For this reason they hold themselves in readiness to attend upon any one who may require their assistance, either through sickness

or accident ; and it would be difficult to pass through the streets of Florence without meeting them in the performance of these duties—sometimes carrying the sick or wounded to the hospitals—sometimes seeking the poor and suffering at their own homes, or bearing to the grave those who have already expired”.

“ But how do they know when they are wanted ?” asked Genevieve. “ If people are sick, I suppose they can send for them ; but if a man fall down and hurt himself, how do they find out anything about it ?”

“ Whenever an accident happens in the streets a bell is rung, and night or day a certain number of the brethren are ever at hand to obey the summons. Another portion of the society are employed in collecting alms of the public for the support of the institution. It was one of these who frightened you and the donkey so much just now, my poor little Genoveffa”, added the old man, with a sly smile.

“ But you said it was the Grand Duke, Grandfather Filippo. How did you know that, I wonder ? for I am sure you could never have seen his face”.

“ I said *perhaps*”, answered Filippo, laughing, “ because it is generally believed that the Grand Duke does belong to this society. Great men, with all their care, cannot conceal their good actions so entirely as those of meaner condition are enabled to do”.

“ And was it the Grand Duke who first desired people to do all these holy things ? What a saint he must be !” cried Genevieve, greatly delighted at the idea.

“ No, indeed, it was not, my child. This society

was founded, I believe, many a hundred years ago, when the plague visited Florence, and, at one and the same instant, changed the fair city of the lily into a pest-house and a grave”.

“The plague! What is that, Grandfather Filippo? Is it a sickness?”

“It is a sickness and a death, my child”, said Filippo, very solemnly. “It seizes on a healthy man in the morning, and leaves him a livid corpse before evening. It flies from city to city—from street to street—from house to house—from one human being to another. It is communicated by the clothes—by the touch—by the very breath of the sufferer. So great is the terror it inspires, that, wherever it appears, man flies from his fellow-man, and even women desert the sick-bed, which brings death as surely to themselves as to the plague-stricken wretch who lies stretched upon it. Those must have been sad times for fair Florence, *Genovessa mia*, when, in the very madness of fear, husbands, it is said, abandoned their wives—wives their husbands—children their parents, and (but I can never believe it) mothers their children. It was in the midst of this panic, while men lay dying in the streets, or dead in their houses, because there was no one to be found who would venture to bear them to their homes or to carry them to their graves, that a few brave and holy men banded themselves together, and vowed a vow to go, for the love of the sweet Jesus, wherever suffering or death should call them. Florence tells us, in her history, how well and how lovingly they fulfilled that vow; for

religion gave them the courage which human nature, unaided of her, could no longer supply. Wherever disease and death were rifest, there were the brethren of the Misericordia to be found. Hidden from the applause of the world by their sable robes, they bore the sick to the hospitals—hung without fear over the bed of the dying—laid those already departed in their graves, and thus saved the city the fearful increase of pestilence which unburied numbers were certain to produce. And think not, my child, that, however terrible these duties may appear to us now, they were fulfilled without gladness. Our God is a generous God, and to him that gives freely he returns without measure: therefore, the brethren of the Misericordia were filled with much sweetness, even in the midst of the horrors they were called on to witness; and so dear did this life of self-sacrifice become to their hearts, that, when the plague ceased, and their services were no longer needed among its victims, they resolved still to remain together, and still to consider themselves as the servants and protectors of the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the unfortunate. So they continued brethren of the Misericordia from that day, and so they continue brethren of the Misericordia to this very hour”.

Genevieve had almost held her breath, in her eagerness to catch every word of the recital; for she was not yet used to the rapid Italian in which Filippo spoke whenever he was excited.

“God himself is their high reward now, as he was in the days of old”, continued the old man, after a moment’s pause. “But one great privilege

the gratitude of man has conferred upon their order ; it is, that every year they may ask and obtain a free pardon for one of their members, should any such have committed a crime, even though the sentence of death had been passed upon him”.

“ Ah, that is well”, said Genevieve, breathing more freely ; “ I am glad they have such a privilege”.

“ It is well, indeed, my child—the mercy which they freely give, it is only justice they should receive freely in return”.

“ And have you ever known it given, Grandfather Filippo ? I should have thought that men so holy would never have required it”.

“ No man is so holy as to be beyond the reach of temptation, and consequently of crime. But such a case did happen some years ago. I remember it as well as if it was only yesterday it occurred”.

“ Do tell me about it, Grandfather Filippo”, cried Genevieve, actually stopping the donkey in her anxiety to listen.

“ I knew him very well”, continued old Filippo, in the tone of importance which people often take when they are telling a true story, “ and he was naturally as good a lad as ever walked the Earth—the only joy and comfort of his parents, who loved him to distraction. He and his father were both brethren of the Misericordia ; but so secretly did they carry on their work of mercy, that neither of them was aware of the other belonging to the society. Poor young Marco had one great fault, which is all the more to be dreaded because it is seldom con-

sidered so dangerous as it really is ; I mean that he had a hot and passionate disposition, which his father always feared would bring him into mischief, but which his mother, on the contrary, rather encouraged than otherwise, saying it was only the fault of his young blood, and would mend as he grew older. So, indeed, it did mend, but not exactly in the way that she expected. One day the boy remained out later than was usual with him. They waited for him all that evening, but he did not make his appearance; they watched for him through the weary hours of the night, but he never came home. In the morning Carlo set out for Florence, and there he learned that Marco had killed a man in a fit of passion, the evening before, and was at that very instant the inmate of a prison. This was bad news to carry back to his poor old wife, and they wept over it without hope ; for the murdered man belonged to one of the noblest families of Florence, and his friends were certain to pursue his assassin to death. From what I have since heard, he was treated with much rigour, nor was he allowed to see his friends until after he had been found guilty and condemned to death ; then he sent word to his father and mother to come and forgive him for the shame and sorrow he had brought upon them ; but they trembled, as well they might, at the thought of seeing their once good and happy Marco in such a terrible situation. Somehow or other it occurred to the father that he would first visit the prison as a brother of the Misericordia ; he thought that in the holiness of this character he would possess greater

firmness himself, and be better able to give consolation to his child. Marco recognized him the very moment he began to speak, and cast himself at his feet, exclaiming : “ You *also*, my father, a member of the Misericordia ? ”

“ What is it you mean by that ? why do you say *also* ? ” cried Carlo, hurriedly : “ speak, speak, and do not keep me waiting ”.

“ I only meant that we both belong to it, and I never knew it until this instant ”, said Marco, in great surprise at his father’s agitation.

“ Saved, saved ! ” cried the father, casting up his hands and eyes to Heaven. “ Almighty Father, I thank thee for thy mercies. Oh, my son, my son ”, he went on, wildly casting himself into Marco’s arms, and sobbing like a child. “ Do you not know that the brethren of the Misericordia have a right, once in the year, to demand pardon for one of their order, should such a one be found in the prisons of Florence ? ”

Poor Marco was speechless from astonishment ; he was still almost a boy, and having joined the brotherhood entirely from devotion, had never even dreamed of their being in possession of the privilege of which his father spoke.

“ But was he saved ? Do tell me, Grandfather Filippo, was he saved ? ” cried Genevieve, eagerly.

“ He was saved, my child. Poor Carlo left the prison, feeling, as he afterwards said, like another Abraham, to whom Isaac had been restored. How the holy brethren manage these matters I cannot tell you, for I do not know ; but he told me himself that,

when he claimed their protection for his son, they were already in possession of all the circumstances of the case, and were preparing to make their application to the Grand Duke. Carlo had, therefore, only to give the message which Marco had charged him, as he valued his salvation, to deliver to them, without changing a syllable".

"And what was that, Grandfather Filippo?"

"It was a sad enough message from the lips of a father, my Genoveffa; and Carlo felt, while he gave it, as if he himself were delivering up his child into the hands of the executioner. It was to the effect, that should any other member of their brotherhood be in prison, and need their assistance, they were to leave poor Marco to his fate".

"And was there another?" cried Genevieve, breathlessly.

"Not one, my child. So in a few days afterwards as many of the Order as could be assembled together, dressed in their solemn robes, and bearing palm branches in their hands, went in procession to the esplanade in front of the grand ducal palace, and there received the act of grace from the hands of their Sovereign himself".

"If he belonged to the Order, he must have been very glad to have had the power of forgiving one of his brethren, I should think", said Genevieve.

"And what did they do next, Grandfather Filippo?"

"They were led by the president of the tribunal to the prison, and there Carlo received his lost child once more into his arms".

"Were they very glad, do you think, Grandfather Filippo?"

“They were grateful, but I do not think they could have been very glad; the crime was of too dark a dye to be lightly forgotten or lightly forgiven. Carlo himself has often told me since, that the thought of receiving back his son as a pardoned murderer went like a dagger into his bosom; and as to poor Marco himself, he fell down upon his knees before the brotherhood, imploring their forgiveness for the scandal he had caused, and the disgrace he had brought upon their Order by his crime”.

“Well, at any rate, his poor old mother, she must have been very glad when he came home again”, urged Genevieve; “for Mimi used to tell me that Madonna Mary, who is also our mother, is always rejoiced when her poor, sinful children come back, trembling and weeping, to her feet”.

“It would be hard to say whether old Berta was most rejoiced at the return of her son, or grieved at the manner in which he returned. Poor Marco himself never held up his head again. One act of passionate impatience had set the brand of Cain upon his forehead, and had changed him from an innocent, rejoicing boy into a sinful and most unhappy man. Berta watched over him, and with him, and beside him, never even appearing to need food or sleep in her anxiety to bring peace to his troubled spirit”.

He paused, and there was a long silence, which the little girl broke at length, by asking softly—

“Do you think Madonna Mary would do as much for me, Grandfather Filippo, if I were so unhappy as to commit a great fault? You know she is the

only mother I shall ever have upon Earth or in Heaven. Do you not think, therefore, she would do all for me that Berta did for Marco?"

"That she would, my child, and a great deal more. She would do all that Berta did, and all that Berta could not do, but which she, the good Madonna, can easily accomplish by prevailing upon Jesus to speak rest and pardon to the repenting soul".

"Good Mary is then the best of all mothers I could have", answered Genevieve, gently; "I am so glad, because it must be very sad to be both sinful and sorrowful, and have no one to comfort us".

"Berta could not comfort Marco, she could only try to do so, but it was all in vain—in vain that she wept with him and for him—in vain that she accused herself loudly as the encourager of his passionate childhood, as if she thought, poor soul, to lessen his guilt and his remorse by taking one-half of the blame upon herself".

"Oh, poor mother—poor Berta! how unhappy she must have been", cried Genevieve.

"It did not last long, however, my Genoveffa. The sorrow which falls heavily on the young, must needs bear down gray hairs with it to the grave; and so it was with poor Berta. Her last trouble upon Earth was the thought—who will comfort him when I am gone?"

"And who did comfort him at last, Grandfather Filippo? for I am sure that he could not have been always sorrowful".

"Even *he*, himself, my child", said Filippo solemnly; "that Good Shepherd, of whom we are told

that having a hundred sheep, and missing one, he left the ninety-nine, and went out into the desert to seek the one that was lost”.

“Ah, that was the sweet Jesus”, cried Genevieve, joyfully. “Yes, to be sure, he could comfort Marco, and make old Berta joyful before she died”.

“He *did* comfort Berta, my child, as well as her son. An hour before she died, Marco stood at her bed-side to tell her how he had found a means of regaining his lost happiness; and there was a smile on his poor, worn face as he said so, which, I doubt not, brought the first gladness to his mother’s heart that had been there for months”.

“And did he tell her what he meant to do, grandfather, I wonder?”

“Yes”, answered Filippo; “and she entirely understood his feelings; and died full of joy, leaving her blessing upon him and his undertaking”.

“I am very glad of that”, cried Genevieve. “And where did Marco think of finding his lost happiness?”

“Where one who had sinned so deeply could only truly find it, Genoveffa—in a life of mortification and self-denial. He had sent a fellow-creature to his last account—unwarned, unconfessed, and too possibly unforgiven; and this thought deprived him of peace and joy, of appetite and sleep, until God, in his mercy, sent another to replace *it*; this was a resolution to do penance for the soul which he had deprived of the power of doing so for itself”.

“He became a monk, Grandfather Filippo?”

“In a convent not far from Florence he became a

monk ; and all his prayers, his tears, his outward austerities and inward mortifications, were offered up by him to the very last hour of his life, for the repose of the soul of his victim”.

“Carlo must have been very sorry to part him, I think”, said Genevieve.

“He did not part from him, my little one ; he became a lay brother in the same convent to which his son had retired, and, three years afterwards, when Marco lay upon his death-bed, his father stood beside him, and, with tears streaming from his old eyes on the dying face of his son, he blessed God aloud for the peace and comfort in which he saw him departing”.

“Then poor Marco did really find happiness in the convent, as he expected, Grandfather Filippo?”

“Surely he did, my child. What does God ever ask of the sinner but that he turn from his evil ways and repent? Marco had done this—He, in His infinite goodness, did the rest, and spoke peace to his soul. His life, indeed, was sorrowful, but his end was full of consolation. So also was that of poor Carlo, who only lived one little month after the death of his son. And now, Genoveffa mia”, said the old man, as he checked the donkey at his own cottage door, “take the dove down from its perch in the acacia and run in, while I bring the donkey back to Lucia”.

“Oh, but the flowers, Grandfather Filippo—the flowers for Madonna Mary ; surely I may gather the flowers before I go in”.

“Better wait until to-morrow morning, Geno-

veffa ; they will be fresher, and, besides, the night is too dark ; you could not see a rose from a violet, daughter of mine”.

“ But I can feel them, Grandfather Filippo, if I cannot see them ; and, besides, the moon is coming out from behind those clouds, and it will soon be nearly as light as day”, cried Genevieve, still lingering with the dove-cage in her hand.

“ Genoveffa mia, you were wishing this morning to be like the Divine Child, Jesus. What do you think he would have done if he had been here in your place ?”

“ I think he would have gone in directly, without minding the flowers, even though they were for Madonna Mary”, answered the little girl without hesitation.

“ Well, my child, perhaps when your feet were swelled you may have been like the little Jesus in the desert ; but you could not be said to have much merit in that, seeing that it was no choice of your own. Now, however, you really can make yourself resembling him by an act of that virtue which he most loved and practised in his childhood ; for Scripture tells us nothing whatever of his life at Nazareth, excepting, indeed, that he dwelt with his parents, and was subject to them”.

“ I am going—I am going—I am gone, Grandfather Filippo”, cried Genevieve, as she vanished into the cottage with the dove-cage in her hand.

CHAPTER V.

"Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us".

THE next three years of Genevieve's life passed away in mingled shade and sunshine. No child could have been happier than she was during the hours which she spent with good Filippo; but this was in some degree counterbalanced by the constant ill temper of his wife. Petronilla was one of those unhappy persons who, having once taken an unreasonable dislike, obstinately persist in it, however causeless and unjust it may afterwards appear to have been. She had said, on the very first evening of their acquaintance, that Genevieve would turn out more troublesome and expensive than all the rest of Filippo's tame favourites together; so in order to prove herself right and every one else wrong, she made it a point every day, and sometimes all day long, to bewail the ruin her husband had brought upon himself by this thoughtless addition to his household. Filippo, on the other hand, boldly declared that, so far from an expense, Genevieve was actually a saving to his purse; and in justice to him it must be said, that in this, as in most other domestic disputes, old Filippo was right. The little girl was quick of wit and light of hand, active and full of life, and quite as willing to work as most other children are to play. The life which she had hitherto led, and which all Mimi's kindness could not prevent from being both solitary and dull, made her present out-of-door occupations seem like

delightful amusements in her eyes, and she entered into them with readiness and zeal. Filippo's garden had always been bright and pretty ; but it grew brighter and prettier than ever, now that Genevieve assisted in the arrangement of its treasures. Never before had the silkworms been so carefully fed and attended—never before had the bees yielded so much of their wax and honey ; for the child seemed to know by instinct every leaf and flower that they loved the best ; and the corner of the garden in which they were placed became a perfect wilderness of sweets under her direction. Even Filippo's collection of unruly pets grew less unruly in her keeping. The cross old dog, whose delight was to snap and snarl at Petronilla, became mute and quiet as a lamb when Genevieve called him and bade him lie down at her feet. The pretty white mice no longer wandered about the room, hiding themselves in Petronilla's shoes, tearing her best lace finery, or nibbling their way into her store of chestnuts and other edibles ; they were content to come every morning to be fed and fondled by Genevieve, and at the first bidding of her finger to slink back into their cage, where they were easily consoled for the narrow limits of their prison by the sunshine in which she was always careful to place it. Even the parrot ceased its eternal scream when her hand was placed upon its feathers, and its harsh voice grew into a softer tone as it repeated : " Genoveffa, Genoveffa ! " which was the last lesson it had learned from its master.

Gentle little Genevieve, who could resist her ?

None of all that varied household, except, indeed, the sulky Petronilla, who never would acknowledge the benefit she received from the interference of the child on these and similar occasions; always continuing to rail at the nuisance after it was removed, as if it were really in existence, and Genevieve often looked at her in utter amazement, wondering how she could contrive to make herself so very unhappy, with the blue skies and bright sun in Heaven above her, and the acacia tree, the flowers, the birds, and the bees, and dear old Filippo, upon Earth beside her. Genevieve did not then know what misery any fault, however small, when wilfully indulged in, may bring to its possessor; though, indeed, bad temper cannot be called a small fault, but rather a great one, and not a single fault, but rather one twofold in its nature: since by it we do evil both to our own soul and to that of our neighbour, whose peace of mind it injures, and whose happiness it too often entirely destroys. We are, therefore, in strict justice, answerable before God, not only for our own sin, but also for all those feelings of wounded pride, anger, hatred, and vengeance, which it may have caused in the breast of another, and which, perhaps, he never would have otherwise experienced; though such a person is not justified thereby in having yielded to them wilfully. If little Genevieve had been conscious of all this, she would not have wondered so much that Petronilla was not only unhappy in herself, but also a cause of unhappiness to others; still less would it have astonished her, had she known how hateful is the sin of anger to the meek

heart of Jesus, who, in his lifetime, pronounced a triple curse upon it, saying : “ Who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment ; who shall say to his brother *raca* (a word expressing indignation or contempt), shall be in danger of the council ; and who shall say to his brother, thou fool (which in those times was considered a heinous injury), shall be in danger of Hell fire”. While, on the other hand, he held out a three-fold reward to all those who should cultivate the opposite virtue, promising the land to the meek, mercy to the merciful, and to the peace-makers the honour of being called the children of God ; and concluding this discourse by a positive command to practise his virtue of meekness in a degree of perfection, which only a God-made man could first have preached or practised it on Earth. Sweet Jesus ! thou hast, indeed, both in thy life, and yet more entirely in thy death, given the example ! Oh, grant us the grace to walk willingly in this path, which thou hast tracked out for us with thy blood—which thou hast made fertile in flowers for us with thy tears, and from whence, in thy own most precious feet, thou hast carried away all the thorns. So may we go on our way through life, loving our enemies, doing good to those who hate us, praying for those that persecute and calumniate us, “ that we may be the children of our Father who is in Heaven, who maketh his sun to shine upon the good and upon the bad, and who raineth upon the just and upon the unjust”.

Perhaps Filippo understood this virtue rather

better than the young Genevieve could as yet be expected to do ; at least it is quite certain that he never was known to retort upon his wife, or to speak of her with unkindness. There was, indeed, one only subject upon which he met her with an obstinacy almost equal to her own, and this was in the cause of his much-abused favourites. She might rail at him or at them as much as she pleased ; but he never would suffer the meanest animal under his protection to be made the victim of her fury. Petronilla herself was so well aware of this fact, that, much as she would have preferred more active measures, she always felt obliged to content herself with threats, little understood by the dumb animals to whom they were addressed, and cared for still less. Genevieve, therefore, became a real relief to her angry soul, since she had the pleasure of seeing her at least tremble and grow pale twenty times a day beneath the fury which the rest of Filippo's favourites received with such provoking indifference. Above all other things, the little girl's dress was an unfailing subject of indignation with her ; for the fact of Genevieve's having been clothed entirely in white on the day he first met her, had convinced Filippo she must have been dedicated to the Blessed Virgin during her childhood, and he, therefore, never permitted her to wear any coloured material while under his care. This in itself would have been quite a sufficient reason for Petronilla's taking an opposite view of the case ; but, besides her natural inclination to contradict her husband, she was a thrifty woman, and had an eye to the expense which

it certainly entailed ; for though Filippo, on week days, permitted Genevieve to wear a common, undyed cotton, yet on the Sundays and holidays he insisted upon her being dressed as he thought a little daughter of Mary ought to be dressed—that is to say, in the purest white muslin he could afford to purchase.

“If she must be dressed like a princess while she is living among beggars”, said Petronilla, “why don’t you at least make her work for it?”

“She does work for it”, answered the old man. “The silkworms are more prosperous, and the bees yield a greater abundance of honey since they have been under her care, than ever they did under yours, Petronilla”.

“That is only saying”, retorted his wife, “that we have had hotter suns and better crops of flowers these last two summers than we have had for a long time before. Every one knows that the honey failed and silkworms died three years ago, on account of the bad weather”.

“Say, at least, then”, answered Filippo, mildly, “that she has brought a blessing on our store, and that God has sent us fine seasons in return for the mercy we have shown to his little one”.

“Stuff and nonsense”, cried the angry woman ; “you are always preaching, Filippo. Genoveffa would bring a much greater blessing upon your store if you made her sell some of the flowers both of you are so fond of at the Cassino. Then, indeed, there might be some use in your eternal planting and digging, whereas now it is a mere waste of time and excuse to be idle, Master Filippo”.

“God help your wits, Petronilla”, cried the old man at last, quite out of patience; “would you send poor little Genoveffa among those gay, saucy girls who toss flowers into all the carriages, and chatter with the fine folk that are in them, as freely as if they were their cousins. Why, the child would die of shame only to be looked at by one of them”.

“Die of shame, forsooth; and pray, what is she so much better than the flower girls, that she should die of shame to be seen among them?”

“I did not say that, Petronilla; I only said she would die of shame if the smart people in the carriages spoke as freely to her as they do to the flower girls”.

Petronilla did not choose to hear this: it was more agreeable to her to consider that Filippo had intended a direct insult to herself and her relations by his unlucky speech, so she went on with increasing vehemence:

“Die of shame, indeed; I wonder you do not die of shame yourself, Master Filippo, to talk in that way, when you know very well that my own sister’s child is one of those very flower girls whom you think not fit company for this stupid little Genoveffa”.

“I have not said a word against the flower girls”, pleaded Filippo; “Ginditta is as good a little girl as ever breathed, and supports your sister entirely by the sale of her flowers; but I think Genoveffa too young and too timid a child for such an occupation; and, besides, she is not our own: therefore, we have no right to employ her in a manner of which it is very possible her parents, whoever or wherever they are, might entirely disapprove”.

“Whoever or wherever they are”, repeated his wife; “you may well say that, old Filippo. She seems to me to have fallen from the moon, like all the rest of your pets; for no one ever saw such a collection of maimed and ugly brutes upon Earth before, I do believe”, she added, with a bitter glance from the purblind parrot to the snappish old dog, who chanced to be eyeing her at the moment, as if he would very much have liked to have returned the compliment by a bite from the sole remaining tusk in his jaw.

Genoveffa generally took refuge in the garden long before the conversation had arrived at this pass, and there, poor child, she often wept in very fear lest her grandfather should at last yield to Petronilla’s request, and send her to the Cassino, which, every one knows, is a pretty farm belonging to the Grand Duke, and the favourite resort of all the gay inhabitants of Florence, who there while away their idle evenings in driving, gossiping, and buying flowers.

It was not that our poor little Genoveffa was too proud or too idle to wish to earn her bread; she would gladly have carried her flowers to the common market, and there sold them to the quiet, sober people who came for no other purpose than to buy; but to have to mingle among the fine ladies and gentlemen of the Cassino; to have to dash in among carriages and horses, as she had seen the flower girls do; to have to talk and be talked to by perfect strangers; and to have to offer herself and her bargains, unbidden, to their notice—all this was too

terrible to be thought of with calmness ; and to save herself from such a calamity, she often begged hard to be allowed to join some of the country people who brought the produce of their gardens to Florence for sale.

But this did not suit Petronilla's views, who knew well that they would sell on the Cassino for double the money they were worth in the markets ; therefore, over and over again she urged upon Genoveffa the poverty of her grandfather, and the great expense he incurred in her support, until at last the poor child began to think she ought to conquer her own feelings, and to do what she could in order to assist him. One evening, after some such a conversation as I have just described, and which had concluded, as frequently happened, by Filippo leaving the cottage to pay a visit to his neighbour Lucia, Genoveffa sat down under the acacia, and consoled herself by a few quiet tears, which fell almost unheeded on the feathers of her dove, as she nestled it in her bosom. "After all", thought she, "Petronilla is right ; Grandfather Filippo is very poor, and I must be a great expense to him, and even Lucia told me the other day that white muslin was no fitting dress for a poor child in a cottage ; and if I can earn money for him, it is my duty to do so, for he will be sure to want it if he gets sick this winter, as Petronilla seems so very certain he will, and Madonna Mary will be with me, and make me as safe among the carriages and horses that dash about so wildly on the Cassino, as if I were sitting here with my quiet Mimi in the cage beside me".

Genevieve set the bird on the perch as she ended this soliloquy, and then, with a beating heart and rather an unsteady hand, began to gather the brightest blossoms of the garden, and to arrange them into bouquets, which she placed very prettily in a little basket.

“What are you doing, child?” said the sharp voice of Petronilla from the cottage door. “Why don’t you gather leaves for the silkworms, instead of spoiling all the flowers in the garden, and wasting your time into the bargain?”

“I was going to bring them to the Cassino, madam”, said the child, in a choking voice, for the very name of the place brought anticipated horrors into her imagination with redoubled force.

“Ah, well, that is right”, said Petronilla, in a kinder voice than she had ever before used in speaking to Genevieve; “now I have some hopes of you, for I begin to believe you are not quite such a fool as your poor old grandfather supposes you to be. But you cannot go in that dress”, she added, glancing at Genevieve’s coarse but clean white cotton frock; go and put on your muslin, and be as quick as you can, for the sun will soon set, and then it will be too late for the Cassino”.

“Perhaps I had better wait until to-morrow, then”, said Genevieve, with a lingering hope that she could obtain a few hours’ respite from her disagreeable undertaking.

“No, no, child; that will never do, for then, perhaps, Filippo will be at home, and will prevent you from going; not but that he will be pleased when

he finds you have actually been, for I know his only real objection is, that he fancies you dislike it yourself”.

“Is that his only reason?” cried the guileless Genevieve, who never for a moment supposed that Petronilla could be guilty of telling a falsehood. “Oh, then, I will go at once—I will try not to dislike it at all, if it really is pleasing to him”.

“To be sure it is pleasing to him; do you think I would ask you to go if I thought it were not?” said Petronilla, following her into the cottage to assist at her simple toilette. This did not take any very long time to arrange, and when it was concluded, Genevieve’s golden hair was banded so meekly on her brow, and her young face looked so innocent beneath the transparent folds of the white veil, which shaded without entirely concealing it, that even the ill-tempered Petronilla felt something like pleasure at the sight, and there was more softness in her manner than it usually possessed, as she put the basket of flowers into the little girl’s hands, and said: “Only just look as you do now when you are on the Cassino, and I will answer for it, you will sell your flowers as well as the best flower girl of them all”.

“I am sure I shall be so frightened I shall not know how to look”, sighed poor little Genoveffa, as she left the cottage garden with a heavier heart than she had ever known since dear old Filippo had taken her under his protection.

It was a long walk to the Cassino, and the sun was setting before Genevieve had proceeded more

than half way thither ; yet she still walked on with a kind of desperate resolution, for she thought that if she once turned back she would never be able to muster up sufficient courage for a second attempt. Star followed star in the deep blue sky, and the moon grew out in lustre and in beauty, until Genevieve ceased to regret the glowing colours of the sunset she had just witnessed, when a light hand laid on her shoulder, startled her from her trance of delight, and, turning hurriedly round, to her great relief she met the merry eyes of Ginditta the flower girl, gazing at her with a mingled expression of amazement and surprise.

“Why, whither are you going, Genoveffa mia, looking for all the world like a little Madonna first stept out of its old picture-frame for a walk in the fair moonlight ? Come, do not stand staring at me so, but let us walk on together. I am for Florence ; and where, pray, may you be going with those beautiful flowers, which seem to me to be just as fresh and as fair as yourself ?”

“I am going to try to sell them at the Cassino”, faltered Genevieve ; but she was interrupted by the merry laugh of the flower girl.

“Why, silly child of mine, there has not been a carriage on the Cassino for at least a good hour past. Sell your flowers, indeed ! No, no ; if you want to sell your flowers, carina mia, you must come with me to Donay’s, and, I’ll answer for it, you will find it easy enough to dispose of them there”.

“Where is Donay ?” asked poor Genevieve, rather terrified at this threatened change in her destination.

Ginditta lifted up her hands and eyes to Heaven, with an expression of comical surprise.

“Two or three years within a walk of Florence, and not know Donay’s, where all the fine people eat ices every evening! Genoveffa mia, you must be as innocent as your own dove, not to have found out Donay’s before now”.

“But how should I know it?” pleaded Genoveffa, a little disconcerted, it may be, by Ginditta’s astonishment at her ignorance. “You know I never was out of the cottage garden after sunset before”.

“Ah, that is true. I had forgotten old Filippo is so strict. What do you think? I met him just now up at Lucia’s, and he has been lecturing me for my frolicsome ways, and even wants to persuade me I am not half so good or so clever as you are, Genoveffa”.

“Did he?” said Genevieve, in great surprise. “Well, I am sure he was wrong in that, Ginditta”.

“Well, perhaps he was wrong, and perhaps he was right”, said the laughing Ginditta.

“But, then, you are good in quite a different way, Ginditta, and, perhaps, that was what Grandfather Filippo meant”.

“Yes, *quite* in a different way”, said Ginditta, with rather a conscious smile upon her face. “*Quite* in a different way, as you say, Genoveffa; I am gay, and saucy, and careless, and you are grave, and gentle, and Madonna-like, and not in the least suited for a flower girl at the Cassino, whatever Petronilla may say to the contrary”.

“How did you know that Petronilla ever said anything about it, Ginditta?”

“You have lived three years within a short walk

of Florence, and yet don't know Donay's", retorted Ginditta ; " therefore your ignorance upon any other subject does not so much surprise me. Yet surely, Genevieve mia, you might have found out by this time that every one in the world troubles himself quite as much about his neighbour's affairs as he does about his own ; in consequence of which good practice, I know all that passes in your cottage pretty nearly as well as I do what is going on at my mother's".

" I should think that must be a very bad plan, Ginditta, and not a very pleasant occupation either", answered Genevieve, as she thought within herself how little pleasure she ever derived from the scoldings of Petronilla.

" Not at all", said the giddy Ginditta ; " it certainly would not be pleasant to be scolded by Petronilla ; but it is a great relief to abuse her for the life she leads you and old Filippo".

" I do not see what relief it can be to you, and I am sure it is none to me or my grandfather. You would do much better for her and yourself if you prayed for her".

" No doubt I should, little saint", said Ginditta, amused at Genevieve's gravity, and yet half ashamed of having deserved her reproof. " I will pray for her to-morrow morning at Mass ; but in the meantime I must tell you that every one within five leagues of your cottage knows how Petronilla rates the old man for not sending you to sell flowers at the Cassino".

" Grandfather Filippo thought I would not like it myself ; that is the reason he always objected to my going, Ginditta".

“Umph!” said Ginditta, shaking her head, as if rather doubtful of the truth of this statement. “That is Petronilla’s view of the case, I dare say. However, now you have got so far, it would be a pity to go back without disposing of your flowers. Yonder is Donay’s”, she added, pointing to a crowd of carriages in the street before them, and stopping at the same moment to rearrange her basket of flowers, and to put her straw hat straight upon her head.

“And what am I to do when we get there?” said poor Genevieve in a tone of most deplorable ignorance.

“Do?” cried her companion, resuming her walk. “Why, run in among the carriages, toss your flowers into the laps of the ladies, laugh, nod, kiss hands, as if they were the best friends you had in the world; but mind you do not take money; they will pay you to-morrow at the Cassino twice as well as they would to-night”.

“But I am afraid of going among the horses, lest I should be run over; and I shall never be able to throw the bouquets straight into the ladies’ laps; and it would be so saucy in a poor little girl like me to kiss hands to all these fine people in their carriages”, faltered Genevieve, ready to cry at the idea of doing such an extravagant thing.

“Poor little thing”, laughed Ginditta; “I remember once thinking as you do now; but never mind it; you will soon get accustomed to it. Keep a sharp look-out, and you will not be run over; and if you cannot toss your bouquets cleverly into the ladies’ laps, you can, at least, throw them into the carriages, which will answer the purpose quite as well.

And now, here we are—follow me, and do just as I do”, cried the flower girl, darting at once into the very thickest of the crowd. Genevieve tried to follow her example, but a sudden movement among the carriages forced her to retreat. A second and a third attempt was followed by a similar result, and she was still hesitating and trembling before making another venture, when a carriage drove up as nearly as it could to the shop door, and one of the ladies it contained immediately pointed her out to the notice of her companion.

“Look, Isidore, look ; did you ever see such a lily-like looking creature among the flower girls before ? See, she is standing just under the light from the shop window. Come here, little virgin of the roses”, she added, beckoning to the child ; “I will buy every flower in your basket, if you will tell me how you have managed to make yourself look so like a little Madonna del Fiore, or whether, indeed, you have not stept out of some old picture gallery to ramble by night through the fair city of Florence”.

Of course Genevieve did not hear all this, but she saw the lady beckoning her, and hoping once and for all to dispose of her flowers, made a desperate dart towards the carriage, being as nearly as possible run over for her pains, had not some one drawn her back, saying at the same time, hurriedly, in French :

“My good God, child ! Take care where you are going, or you will be knocked down among the crowd !”

“Mimi !” cried Genevieve, dropping her basket in her extreme surprise, and gazing earnestly on the speaker.

It was not the kind eyes and peasant cap of Mimi, however, that met her anxious scrutiny, but an elderly gentleman, whose ecclesiastical dress and pitying voice gave her courage to say to him in French :

“ You speak like Mimi, sir ! Do you know her ? Can you tell me where she is ? ”

“ My child, I do not know her : have you lost her in this crowd ? ”

“ Not now—not now”, gaid Genevieve, confusedly ; “ but many years ago I lost her in the streets of Rome ”.

The gentleman took her by the hand, and Genevieve suffered him to lead her in silence wheresoever he would ; for she was completely bewildered by the many recollections which the sound of her own language had awakened in her mind.

“ Now”, said the old gentleman, pausing, as soon as they had got completely out of the noise and bustle of Donay, “ tell me, my child—it is not usual for a little Florentine maiden to talk French like a Breton peasant—are you of this city ? ”

“ Yes, sir ; no sir”, stammered Genevieve ; “ that is to say, I have only been a Florentine for these last two years—since I have lived with my grandfather Filippo ”.

“ Is your grandfather among those people ? ” asked the old gentleman, pointing to the crowd.

“ No, sir”, faltered Genevieve.

“ Does he know that you are here this this evening ? ”

“ No, sir”, said Genevieve, feeling, she hardly knew why, very much ashamed beneath the scrutinizing eyes of the ecclesiastic.

“Do you think he would approve of it if he did know it?”

Genevieve hesitated for half a moment, and then said, very frankly :

“No, sir ; I am now quite sure that he would not, though I did not think so when I set out”.

“My child”, said the old gentleman, gravely, “your grandfather is quite right ; this is no place for you. Where do you live ? I will myself see you safe to your home”.

“If you are of Florence, sir, I am afraid it will take you a good step out of your way, for we do not live in the city”.

“With whom, then, did you come, my child ? for you are not of an age to wander about the country alone at this hour of the evening”.

“I came with Ginditta the flower girl, sir ; but I lost sight of her in the crowd”.

“Never mind seeking for her, then”, said the priest ; “I will take you back—the walk is nothing—and I suppose your companion can take care of herself”.

“O dear, yes, sir ; for she is one of the regular flower girls, and is here every night. She is a great deal older than I am”.

“Well, then, we shall not wait for her. Now, you must show me the way, and tell me, at the same time, who taught you to speak French. It appears to be more your native language than Italian”.

“I had almost forgotten even that I knew it, sir, until I heard you speak, and then it all came back to me just like a flash of lightning. This is the way

to our cottage, and we shall not be long now, for the road is quite straight before us”.

Genevieve's story was not a very long one ; so it was quite finished by the time they came in sight of the cottage and of old Filippo, who had been seeking her in every direction, for Petronilla took care not to tell him where she had sent her.

“Thank God, you are safe, my child. Where have you been, Genoveffa?”

“In Florence, with Ginditta, Grandfather Filippo. She brought me there to sell flowers”.

“Very wrong in Ginditta”, said the old man ; “especially after all I had been saying to her this very evening”.

“My good friend”, said the ecclesiastic, gravely, “this child is too young for such an occupation : she has nearly been run over already”.

“It was not her fault, I suspect, she went—nor mine either, your reverence. My wife must have sent her in my absence ; but it shall not happen again. And now, Genoveffa mia, thank his reverence for his kindness, and ask his blessing ; for we must not give him the trouble of coming any further”.

“Is that your cottage I see before us, my good friend?”

“Yes, my reverend father. The one standing close to that great acacia”.

“I will call on you to-morrow, then, my friend. I should like to know more of this little girl's story, for, as you may perceive, I am a French priest, and I come from the part of the country to which I suspect she belongs ; so it is quite possible I may assist you in discovering her friends”.

“I will not give your reverence this trouble, for I can easily bring the child into Florence to see you”.

“I say Mass every morning at the Santa Maria. I am always to be heard of there. But as I am much occupied in the arrangement of the affairs which brought me into Italy, I should prefer walking out to your cottage whenever I can find a leisure moment”.

“Your reverence will always find me in or near the cottage, except, indeed, to-morrow”, added Filippo, correcting himself; “for I have promised Genoveffa to bring her to the city to see the Corso dei Barberi, and other rejoicings for the Feast of St. John, and it would be a pity to disappoint the child”.

“Certainly it would”, said the clergyman, with a smile. “It is not often you see horse races in Florence, I fancy”.

“Only once in the year”, answered Filippo. “Your reverence almost speaks Italian as if you were born among us”.

“My mother was a Florentine”, said the priest with a sigh. “I came here but to follow her to the grave. May the holy will of God be accomplished in her and in us all”.

“Amen”, said Filippo, reverently uncovering his head.

“Amen”, echoed the priest; and then, as if afraid of trusting himself with his own thoughts, he added quickly: “The day after to-morrow, then, I will be with you if I can. Adieu, my friend. Do not suffer your little one to wander any more into the city at this late hour, if you can prevent it”.

“I promise you she shall not”, answered Filippo.

“Will not your reverence come in and rest yourself after your walk?”

“Thank you, no. It is rather late, and I must try and get back to the city as fast as I can”.

CHAPTER VI.

“Most sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us”.

“OH, Grandfather Filippo, I never in my life saw anything so beautiful before”, cried Genevieve, as she walked with Filippo the next day through the streets of Florence. “See all the soldiers, and horses, and carriages, and fine company; and look! the houses are hung from top to bottom with such lovely, bright-coloured tapestry. But who will ride the horses?”

“Nobody, Genoveffa. They have spurs attached to their bodies, which make them go quite as fast, and faster perhaps than if they had riders”.

“But is not that rather dangerous? they might run in among the people”, said Genevieve, seeming rather doubtful as to the degree of amusement to be derived from seeing wild horses gallop at their will through a crowded city. “Will they come down this street, Grandfather Filippo?”

“Yes, this is the street in which they are to run. They will be turned loose at the top, and gallop right down to the other end, and the owner of the horse that comes in first receives the prize; but do not look so frightened, Genoveffa mia; they will not do you any harm”.

“No, Grandfather Filippo ; but had we not better get a little on one side ? for I suppose they will run just where we now are, in the middle of the street”.

“Oh, do not be afraid”, said Filippo ; “we shall have plenty of time to get out of the way before they come. I want to show you the grand duke and all the young princesses ; and we can see them where we are much better than we could from one side”.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a cry arose among the spectators of “They are coming, they are coming—out of the way, out of the way”. Unluckily, Filippo was at that very moment stooping to pick up his stick, which he had dropt ; and the noise and bustle had been so great all along, that it was no wonder he did not now take notice of the warning. Genevieve did, however, and turning, she saw the horses coming towards them at a furious rate, the crowd dividing on either side to let them pass. She tried to make Filippo aware of his danger, and caught him by the arm ; but she was so terrified, that her heart reeled and her eyesight failed her, and she would have remained exactly where she was had not a strong hand forced her backwards among the people ; and then the warning shout arose once more. This time Filippo heard it, but it was all too late. In his terror and confusion his foot slipped, and, before he could recover himself, down came the riderless horses, maddened by the spurs which were fastened round their bodies ; down they came like a whirlwind, swept

over the old man, dashed down the street, and were out of sight in a moment. A cry of horror went forth from the spectators, and Genevieve sprung into the middle of the street. "Grandfather Filippo, Grandfather Filippo", she cried, in a despairing voice, as she knelt down beside the motionless form in the dust. "Grandfather Filippo, Grandfather Filippo", she repeated yet more wildly, while she laid his head in her lap, and watched for some symptom of returning life. In vain she waited and she watched. The eyes were closed, the lips were mute, and, feeling instinctively that it must indeed be something very like death which could prevent the kind-hearted old man from soothing her fears, she bent down until her young face rested among his gray hairs, and wept in silence. A crowd had by this time gathered round her, but she heeded them not: neither did she hear the solemn tolling of the bell, which, five minutes afterwards, brought the brethren of the Misericordia to the spot, with a kind of bier, upon which they gently and carefully laid the body of poor Filippo.

"He lives", said one of them, feeling his heart, and finding it still beating; and a moment afterwards, Filippo opened his eyes, and fixed them on Genevieve.

"We must carry him to the hospital", said another of the brethren; but this time Filippo heard him, and said, in a faint but earnest voice:

"Oh, not to the hospital, but home—home!"

"Where does your grandfather live?" asked the hooded figure of Genevieve; but she was weeping too bitterly to answer.

“It is poor old Filippo the shoemaker”, said some one in the crowd ; “he lives not far out of the city, and I will gladly show you the way to his cottage, good brother, if you wish it”.

“Do so, my good friend; God will reward you for your charity”, said the brother. He and his companions then raised the bier, and, followed by the weeping Genevieve, moved slowly down the street. Filippo appeared to revive when they got clear of the dense crowd, and the air of the country blew freshly on his forehead.

“Do not cry, little Genoveffa”, he murmured, as he caught the sound of her heavy sobs ; and then, after a vain attempt to turn to the side of the bier at which she was walking, he whispered : “Take hold of my hand, mia Genoveffa, and walk beside me”.

She did not hear him, but one of the brethren goodnaturedly drew her to the place where her grandfather wished her to be ; and having lowered the bier so that she could reach up to his hand, they once more proceeded in solemn silence until they reached the cottage ; there they paused, and while some of them went in to acquaint Petronilla with this unlooked-for calamity, the others laid the wounded man under the acacia, beneath which he and the child had spent so many happy and innocent hours together. Genevieve knelt down beside him, and covered her face with her hands. She felt as if she were still in a horrible dream.

“Genoveffa mia”, murmured Filippo. She did not answer—she was all but choking. “Poor

little Genoveffa", he whispered, not to her, but to himself; "who will take care of her when I am gone?"

Petronilla now made her appearance with wild cries and passionate lamentations; but they were all lost upon Filippo, who had fainted from excessive pain, and in that state was removed by the charitable brethren to the bed which they had prepared in the cottage. They had already sent for a surgeon, who succeeded in restoring him to his senses, but who held out so little hope of his being able to survive, even for twenty-four hours, the severe injuries he had received, that it was deemed absolutely necessary to acquaint him with his danger. One of the brethren drew near his bed for this purpose. The old man was lying on it, gentle and calm as he had ever been, neither seeming to indulge in selfish pity for himself, nor to ask for it from others.

"My dear friend", said the brother, "I find by the surgeon's account that you have been sadly injured, nor would it be right to conceal from you that he considers your life in the greatest danger".

Filippo closed his eyes, but he made no answer; and the brother fancying that his silence arose from fear of death and want of resignation, went on to say:

"The summons is indeed unexpected, and the time is short; but God is so good, that the few minutes we give to repentance here, he will reward by an eternity of mercy hereafter. If you reflect a little on this, you will no longer fear death, but will rather accept it willingly as the best atonement you can make for the offences of your past life".

The old man opened his eyes once more as the brother ceased to speak, and then he said, in his simple, quiet way, without any perceptible change of manner:

“Dear brother, I am not at all afraid to die; for by the grace of God I have tried to live every day these last forty years, as if it were to be the last of my life. Therefore, now I have little to trouble me, and I am ready to go whenever he calls”.

“God has been good to you, my friend”, said the brother. “They indeed who fear death during their life, will have all the less cause to tremble when it really approaches. Your confessor is aware of your accident, and waits to see you”.

“He is very kind”, said Filippo, gently; “pray, beg of him to enter. But, first, one word with thee, my little Genoveffa”, he added, addressing the poor child, who was kneeling at his bedside, sorrowful and frightened, but not yet entirely conscious of the loss she was about to sustain. “Go into the garden, dear one, and bring hither all the flowers you can find; for I guess the sweet Jesus will visit us this evening, and we must make what preparation we can to do honour to His divine presence among us. Seek the fairest and the sweetest you can find, Genoveffa mia; for it is fitting that the fairest and the sweetest should be given to Him, who is the Giver and the Lord of all”.

The little girl obeyed in silence; young as she was, she had already acquired great command over her own feelings; and while Petronilla yielded to the self-loving grief which sent her from one fit of

hysterics into another, and rendered her both useless to the sufferer and a burden to the assistants, Genevieve silently aided the brother of the Misericordia in the arrangement of the altar upon which the blessed sacrament was to repose. She chose for this purpose Filippo's own little table, by which he had ever prayed; his crucifix and Madonna were there already, and she added candles and small baskets of flowers, arranged indeed as gracefully as ever, but heavy with the tears that had fallen unconsciously among them. Not satisfied with this, she scattered bud and blossom profusely over the floor, and spread her little white veil across the coverlet, as far as ever she could make it go. Then she left the room, and, in spite of the solemnity of the occasion, the good brother of the Misericordia could scarcely resist a smile when he beheld her re-enter with her dove, which she placed carefully, cage and all, on the ground, at the foot of old Filippo's bed. He did not, however, tell her to take it hence, for he saw that she had brought it in all simplicity, as the most precious of her earthly treasures, and therefore the one most likely to be acceptable to Jesus.

And who shall say that Genevieve judged not rightly? for if the heavens show forth the glory of the Lord, so also doth the meanest of His creatures! And there have saints been known to fall into ecstasies while gazing on a flower; for, in its graceful form and glowing colours, they saw an image of His beauty; in the economy by which it draws its subsistence out of the dark earth around it, they beheld

His wisdom; and in its very existence they recognized His omnipotence, which made all things out of nothing, and which said: "Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and the fruit tree yield fruit after its kind; and so it was done". Some such thoughts as these passed like lightning through the mind of the good brother, and he felt glad he had not expelled her pretty favourite from the room; for when he saw Genevieve kneel down beside it, he easily perceived that her mind was not occupied with it, though her person was so near it. Very far indeed were the thoughts of Genevieve at that moment from her dove or her flowers. She knew that in the shades of evening the good Jesus visits not his people at their homes, save when sickness unto death calls him thither to console them; therefore, she guessed the truth,—guessed that Filippo was dying, and she buried her face in the coverlet, that her sobs might not disturb the solemnity of the hour; nor did she once dare to look up during the ceremonies that followed. But when the lights were extinguished, and the priest, who had another duty of the same kind to attend to elsewhere, had departed, and the brother of the Misericordia alone remained to suggest thoughts of hope and comfort to the dying man; then the poor child ventured to creep round to the side of the bed on which he was stretched, and taking one of his hands, as it lay motionless beside him, she pressed it to her lips. Filippo opened his eyes, and sighed deeply when he saw her.

"God help you", said the brother of the Miseri-

cordia, compassionately ; “ you are in pain, my poor friend ! ”

“ Not so ”, answered Filippo ; “ the pain is fast subsiding ”. And then he murmured, in an undertone, “ Alas for poor little Genoveffa ! a second time lost, a second time left alone ; who will take care of her when I am gone ? ”

“ My good friend ”, gently interposed the brother, “ do not let such thoughts disturb you ; surely your wife will take all the care you could wish of her grandchild ”.

“ Alas, dear brother, this is not her grandchild or mine either, neither does she love it ; but that is not so wonderful, you know ”, Filippo added, true to the last to his habit of making excuses for the temper of his wife, “ for she never had any children of her own ; so, of course, she does not care about them. With me it was different ; for naturally I love all the creatures God has made : how much more, therefore, the little ones for whom he died ? ”

“ But if you were to speak to your wife ”, rejoined the brother, “ she would probably attend to your last wishes, even though she does not love the child ”.

“ Perhaps so ”, said Filippo, doubtfully, for he knew his wife’s temper better than the good brother did ; though this last also had some suspicions of the truth ; for in the discharge of his charitable duties, he had almost always found that a selfish, unreasonable grief was the offspring of a selfish, unreasonable temper, and that those who felt the most were seldom the persons who expressed it loudest.

Still he thought it right that Filippo should appeal to the kindness of his wife in behalf of the child ; therefore, he went to seek out Petronilla, and, after making her promise neither to disturb the invalid by her screams or frantic gesticulations, he led her to the sick room, which, however, she had no sooner entered than, flinging herself on her knees beside her husband, in total forgetfulness of all her assurances that she would be as quiet as a lamb, she began crying out, like one in a frenzy of sorrow :

“ Oh, Filippo mio, Filippo mio, what will become of me when you are gone ! Oh, the heavy day that is fallen upon me ; unhappy woman that I am ! ”

“ She only thinks of herself ”, thought the brother ; “ it is little to her that the old man is almost in his agony, and even now exhausted by pain ! ”

And then he tried to check the feeling of disgust with which her selfishness inspired him ; for poor Filippo was speaking in words so full of peace and kindness, they came like a reproach upon his own more angry emotions.

“ I grieve for you, my poor Petronilla ”, said the old man, gently ; “ it is indeed very sad to be left alone, and especially at your age ; but your sister will, I doubt not, be kind to you, and so also will Ginditta ; for she is a good girl, though a little trifling now and then : and that reminds me, I may, perhaps, have spoken harshly to her last night. I pray you ask her to forgive me if I did ; and beg her, from me, not to speak so wildly any more. I know she means nothing by it, but indeed, indeed, it is better for a young girl to be a little more sedate ”.

“I am sure you never said anything harsh to me or any one else, dear uncle”, said the flower girl, who had been at the cottage ever since morning, assisting her mother in the care of Petronilla, and had now followed this last into the room. “I deserved all you said to me last night, and more too; but I will try and be better, if I can, for the future”.

“And you will never bring Genoveffa to sell flowers again at Donay’s?” said Filippo, anxiously.

“Never, I promise you, dear uncle, if you will believe me”.

“I do, thank you, Ginditta; and you, dear wife, you surely will not refuse the last request I shall ever make of you? it is, that you will be kind, very kind to little Genoveffa. You can do what you like with the rest of them, dear Petronilla”, said the old man, with a failing voice, as he thus delivered his other favourites into her hands; “you can send them all away if you like it, only do be kind to poor Genoveffa for my sake, Petronilla; or, if not for mine, for the sake of the sweet Jesus who loves her so well”.

“Yes, yes! I will be kind to her”, said Petronilla, in a harsh, dry voice, which augured little for the future happiness of the child; “though I hardly know how I shall ever forgive her your death!” she added, eyeing Genevieve with the look of a fury.

“My death! Petronilla, what can you mean? surely you do not accuse the child of my death”.

“You can always excuse her”, replied his wife, with a feeling of anger which the very presence of death could not entirely control; “but I cannot so

easily forget that only for her you would never have gone to the city to-day, or have been run over by those terrible horses ; so that, in fact, she is the cause of your death as much as if she had killed you with her own hand”.

A sob escaped the lips of the poor child at hearing herself so unceremoniously accused of the death of the only friend she had in the world, and Filippo also groaned, for he saw that nothing could change or soften the temper of his wife ; and he was full of anguish as he considered what might hereafter be her conduct to his unhappy little Genoveffa. The brother of the Misericordia felt pity for them both, and he put an end to the scene by making a sign to the indignant Ginditta, who instantly led her aunt out of the room. Filippo was silent for a few moments after her departure, struggling with his own emotions ; and Genevieve, who had not attempted to defend herself from the charge made against her, laid her head on the old man’s hands, and sobbed as if her very heart would break.

“ Genoveffa mia”, he said at last, “ heed her not, she is mistaken ; look up, my own darling, for, as I am about to appear before the judgment-seat of God, I declare to you I should have gone into the city to-day whether you had come with me or not”.

“ You must not leave the child in her care, however”, said the brother of the Misericordia, suddenly ; “ she would break her heart in a fortnight”.

“ But what am I to do with her then ?” asked the old man, mournfully.

“ Leave her to me, my friend ; I know one who

is both able and willing to befriend her—unless you yourself can fix upon a fitter person for this office”.

Filippo started joyfully.

“I do know one, who I am certain would be kind to her. Oh, if he were but here!”

“Can I bring him to you?” said the brother; “I will seek him this instant, if you wish”.

“I know not his name, good brother; but he is a foreign priest, and always says Mass at the Church of the Santa Maria. Say to him that his charity is needed for the child whom he met at Donay’s last night; but, alas, I fear you will never be able to find him”.

“Do not fear that: if he is in Florence he shall be with you before night”, answered the brother quickly; and calling Ginditta, and telling her to watch by the old man until his return, he left the cottage, and set off at a quick pace for the city. An hour had barely elapsed before he returned with the Breton priest.

“This is sad indeed”, said the latter, approaching Filippo and taking his hand; “I little thought, my friend, when I parted from you last night, that our next meeting would be thus”.

By the light of the lamp which now burned on his table, Filippo gazed earnestly on the face of the speaker, and was comforted. There was no mistaking the expression of that countenance. He who bore it must, surely, have all his lifetime walked in the ways of Jesus Christ—“beautiful ways, and full of peace”.

“This good brother has already acquainted me

with your wishes in regard to the child", continued the priest, anxious as much as possible to spare the sick man the trouble of speaking; "and doubt not that I consider myself honoured by the office you would have me fulfil".

"But before you decide upon anything else", said the brother of the Misericordia, speaking in a very hurried and embarrassed manner, "I must tell you that I have found means to acquaint the Grand Duke with your misfortune; and his excellency has assured me he will himself be a father to your grandchild, if you will bequeath her to his care".

Filippo shook his head. "His excellency is very kind, and I am most grateful to him; he is very good, also—that I know well; but if he were a saint, he could not watch over Genoveffa as I would have watched over her myself. Then, too, the child loves the green fields and flowers so well, she would die if she were mewed up in a palace; and yet, perhaps, she may some day feel inclined to reproach me with having neglected her interest in refusing such an offer"; and the old man paused, looking pained and unhappy in the difficulty of choosing rightly for his little one.

"You should consider well what would be most for her happiness", said the priest, gently; "and before deciding upon anything, I must tell you, as you are not, perhaps, already aware of it, that I am but a poor priest of Brittany, and the home which I have to offer to your child is as humble as your own".

"It is for that very reason I prefer it", answered Filippo, faintly; "but what will the child say hereafter to my choice?"

“Perhaps”, suggested the brother, “it would be as well to speak to the little girl herself; she is surely old enough to have some voice in the matter”.

“That is true”, said Filippo, much relieved; “and she is wise, too, for her age, is little Genoveffa, and will choose well and sensibly, I dare say. Come hither to me, my child”; and, in obedience to his wishes, Genevieve came to him from the foot of the bed, where she had been sitting on the ground all this time, almost stupefied with sorrow.

“Genoveffa mia”, continued the old man, taking hold of both her hands, and looking earnestly in her face, “you know already that I am going to leave you—nay, weep not for that, my child—some day, I trust, we shall meet again in that happy land, where sin cannot sadden nor death destroy. I leave you, but not an orphan; for Mary is still your mother; the good God is still your father, still watches over and protects you; and while he takes poor Filippo to himself, still sends another to supply his place. You have already heard, my child, the Grand Duke and this good priest are equally willing to afford you protection; it is for you, Genoveffa, to choose between them”.

“I will do whatever you wish, Grandfather Filippo”, sobbed Genevieve, who, though she had heard, could scarcely be expected entirely to understand the nature of the offer thus made to her.

“I must not altogether speak my wishes; but, Genoveffa mia!” continued the old man, earnestly, “never forget that Mary lived in a cottage at Nazareth, while Herod ruled in a palace at Jerusalem”.

“ I choose the cottage”, said Genevieve, suddenly ; “ for then I shall be, perhaps, all the nearer to Madonna Mary”.

“ Go and kiss the good priest’s hand then”, cried Filippo, joyfully ; “ for henceforth he will be a better father to you than the one you are now losing”.

Genevieve obeyed in silence ; but as soon as the priest had given her his blessing, she returned to the side of her grandfather, and hid her face partly in his hands and partly in her own, as children will often do when their young hearts are bowed down with sorrow.

There was a long silence, for Filippo was much exhausted by the efforts he had made ; but when the brother of the Misericordia put some cordial to his lips, he said, feebly, while he tried to take his hand :

“ Whether you be the Grand Duke, or another in his name, I know not ; but in either case I ask your pardon if I have wounded your feelings by what I said to the child”.

“ My good friend”, said the brother, smiling, “ neither I nor the Grand Duke have anything to complain of ; you have chosen for your adopted child as his excellency would certainly have wished to have chosen, had he been in your situation and about to appear before his Maker. At such a moment who does not see the folly of riches, and the advantages which humble poverty has over greatness?”

“ I am grateful, indeed, to you and to my most gracious sovereign ; to you, also, my father”, Filippo added, addressing the French priest.

“You must pray for us, then, when you get to Heaven, and for this little one also”, said the priest, removing one of Genevieve’s hands, but suffering her to drop her head again upon the pillow, when he saw that her face was covered with tears.

“Yes”, answered the old man, simply, “I will pray God to bless you and Genoveffa also”.

“That is right”, said the brother of the Misericordia, kindly. “How is it with you now, my friend?”

“It is well, my brother; I no longer feel pain”.

“Then it is time to make ready”, replied the brother; “for the surgeon said that when pain ceased, death would be very near”.

“I am ready”, said Filippo. “Dear brother, give me that crucifix on the table”.

The brother handed it to him, and as he did so, he whispered to the priest:

“Had we not better remove the child?” But low as the whisper was, Genevieve heard it, and she said, imploringly, “Oh, do not send me to Petronilla—I will not sob or cry—only let me stay—only let me stay”.

“Let her stay”, said the old man; “she does not like to go to Petronilla, and Genoveffa is very quiet; she will not disturb me. My good father, will you not pray beside me?”

The priest readily complied with this request, and prayed at intervals during the whole of that night; for it was morning before poor Filippo expired. He died as he had lived—gentle as a child, uncomplaining and resigned. His last look was upon the

wounds of his crucified Saviour—his last effort was to kiss them—and then, without pain or struggle of any kind, he yielded his soul into the hands of his Creator, going to God as one who loved him all too well to fear his judgment.

Genevieve had fallen asleep upon the floor long before this occurred ; and when she awoke in the morning, and found that her dear old grandfather was no more, she was already so exhausted by grief and fatigue, that it seemed as if she were incapable of feeling anything further.

The next few days passed away like a sorrowful dream ; nor was it until the hour arrived when she was to leave the cottage for ever that Genevieve seemed fully to comprehend the change in her situation. Ginditta, who was really good-natured, and delighted the child should escape from the harsh treatment of her aunt, packed up all her things herself, taking care to include among them the frock and veil which she had worn on her first arrival at Florence, and which had been carefully preserved, as a means of identifying the child, should it so happen that any one ever inquired about her.

This had been a precaution of Petronilla's rather than of her husband's ; for the diamond cross which she wore naturally led her to suppose that Genevieve's former protectors were both powerful and rich, and, therefore, very likely, on her discovery, if it ever took place, to offer a considerable reward to those who had given her a home during her absence from them. Filippo's dying bequest of the little girl to the care of her own countryman had entirely

destroyed this expectation ; therefore, Petronilla's temper was, if possible, more irritated by Genevieve's departure than it had been by her arrival ; and she inveighed bitterly against the old man's cruelty in thus depriving her of the only living creature likely to be a companion to her in the lonely days of her widowhood. In vain Ginditta (who, it must be confessed, took rather a wicked delight in tormenting her cross aunt) represented that, having always hitherto considered the child as a burden, Filippo had fancied himself doing her a service when he relieved her of her company ; and she contrived to work Petronilla nearly into a frenzy by her oft-repeated prophecies, that, once settled in her native country, Genevieve would soon be discovered by her parents, who, according to her account, were sure to turn out both high-born and wealthy, as well as anxious to show their gratitude to the good priest for his care of their lost one by a handsome reward. Delighted at the effect which Petronilla's flashing eyes showed her too plainly this speech had produced, and yet not particularly anxious to encounter the storm that was certain to follow, Ginditta ran out of the room, and nearly stumbled over Genevieve, who was sitting on the ground at the cottage door, one arm resting on her little bundle, while the other was thrown over the cage of the dove.

“ Bless, me, little Genoveffa, what are you doing there ? ” she cried. “ One would fancy you were counting all the flowers in the garden, you are staring at them so earnestly ”.

“So I am, almost”, said Genevieve, sadly; “it seems so strange to think that I shall never see them again”.

“Now, how do you know that, Genoveffa?” said the flower girl, very unceremoniously removing Genevieve’s arm from her bundle, and seating herself upon it. “Who knows but you will discover your parents in the new country to which you are going, and that you will come back here as the daughter of a rich nobleman, to shame old Petronilla out of her cruelty to you?”

“I don’t want to shame Petronilla”, answered Genevieve, sighing. “Grandfather Filippo did not think I was the daughter of a nobleman, but rather an orphan supported by his charity”.

“Grandfather Filippo was a good, simple, old man, but he knew nothing of the world”, retorted the flower girl. “Do you think rich noblemen give charity children their fine diamonds to wear? No, no; take my word for it, we shall be having you among us again as a princess, or a countess at the least; and then, I trust, your little excellency will remember poor Ginditta the flower girl, when you meet her at the Cassino”, she added, with a roguish smile, making a gesture, as if tossing flowers into Genevieve’s lap.

Genevieve blushed to the forehead, but she could not help smiling, as she said: “How foolish you are, Ginditta; I am but a poor child, and I don’t want to be anything else”.

“Well, well, we shall see”, said Ginditta, rising from her low seat; “and here is his reverence close

to the gate. You will remember me—will you not, little Genoveffa, when you are far away in your distant home?”

“That I will indeed”, said the child, her eyes filling with tears. “But oh! dear Ginditta, I am so afraid of going away, and being all alone with that strange gentleman”.

“You must not call me a strange gentleman, my child”, said the kind voice of the old clergyman, who had overheard her last words as he entered the garden. “I am but the servant of the good Jesus, and therefore the father and the friend of all who have need of my assistance”.

“His reverence does not eat little children, I dare say”, said Ginditta, gaily; “nor doves either, I hope”, she added, as she saw the priest glance rather uneasily at the cage, which Genevieve still held in her hand.

“Who does it belong to?” he replied, somewhat doubtfully.

“It is mine”, said Genevieve; “Grandfather Filippo caught it in the woods, and gave it to me his own self”.

“But, my dear child”, said Ginditta, gravely, “you cannot take it with you; it would be inconvenient to his reverence”.

Genevieve put the cage quietly into Ginditta’s hand, and said, as well as she could through her tears: “You will take care of it, then, dear Ginditta; and do not let Petronilla kill poor Mimi”.

“No, no”, said the indulgent old priest, quite unable to bear Genevieve’s look of silent disappoint-

ment ; “it is not a long walk into Florence, and when we get there we will buy a small cage, in which it can be more easily carried”.

“I am going into the city this instant, and I will gladly carry it in for your reverence”, said Ginditta, good-naturedly ; “and if you will tell me from what inn you start, I will have it packed up and ready long before you and Genoveffa are half way to Florence”.

The priest thanked her, and gave his direction, and Ginditta instantly set off with the dove, while he and Genevieve went into the cottage. Petronilla’s passionate fit had passed away by this time, and she could not help feeling something like remorse as the ill-used little girl went very meekly up to her to say her adieus and to kiss her hand.

“If I have not been quite so kind to you as I might have been, you forgive me ; do you not, Genoveffa?” she whispered, turning scarlet at this very unusual humiliation for her.

“Yes, indeed I do”, Genevieve answered with simple earnestness.

“You were very troublesome, you know, Genoveffa”.

“Yes, madam”, the child quietly replied.

“And very provoking, also, sometimes”.

“Yes, madam”, said Genevieve, timidly.

“And very expensive, likewise”.

“Yes, madam, and to Grandfather Filippo also”, said Genevieve, weeping sadly.

“And if you should ever become rich, you will remember all this, I hope”.

“I shall never be rich”, answered the little girl, with provoking composure.

“But if you should?” persisted Petronilla.

“If she should, you shall not be forgotten”, replied the priest. “I think I can promise you that, both in her name and in the name of those to whom she may belong”.

“Then you forgive me, Genoveffa?”

“Yes, madam, if—if”—Genevieve hesitated, and then added boldly, “if you will be kind to poor Carlo, for Grandfather Filippo’s sake”.

“What! to the nasty old dog!” cried Petronilla, her temper rising at the very idea.

“Grandfather Filippo loved it”, was Genevieve’s only reply.

“And I suppose I must take care of the white mice also, or her little excellency will not be contented?”

“No”, said Genevieve; “Ginditta has promised to take care of them, and she will, too, I know, for she is very good-natured”.

“Well”, said Petronilla, after a kind of struggle with herself, “I will do what I can to be kind to the ugly brute”.

“That is well”, said the priest in an encouraging tone; “and now, my child, we must make what haste we can; for it is growing late, and we are to start at two o’clock”.

Genevieve kissed Petronilla’s hand once more, and then took up the little bundle which contained all her worldly possessions; but the priest speedily relieved her of this burden, and taking her by the hand,

led her from the cottage. He did not speak to her again, however, for he saw that she was crying bitterly; so they pursued their way almost in silence until they reached the inn, where they found Ginditta, who advanced from the crowd of idlers at the gate, holding up in triumph the neat little basket which she had provided for the dove. It was so light and small that Genevieve could easily carry it in her hand, and the kind old priest was glad to see her smile through her tears as she received it from the flower girl.

“Adieu, your reverence—adieu, little Genoveffa”, cried Ginditta, as they took their places in the carriage.

“Adieu, dear Ginditta”, said the sobbing child, and then she retreated to the side of her new protector; the door was shut, Ginditta waved her hand, and the carriage drove away.

Genevieve felt very much frightened at first; the motion of the carriage, however, soothed her, and she fell into a heavy sleep, from which, unluckily, she was soon awakened by a jolt that sent the dove's cage nearly flying out of her hand, and she started up, crying out, Grandfather Filippo! but seeing only a stranger beside her, she suddenly remembered the old man was dead, and burst into tears.

The priest took both her little hands very gently in his, and said in French:

“Do not be frightened, my child; I shall be always to you in the place of poor Filippo”.

“Shall you, then, be my grandfather?” sobbed Genevieve.

“If you wish it”, said he, with a smile; “but you must always call me Father Ambrose, for that is my name”.

CHAPTER VII.

“Most sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us”.

GENEVIEVE drooped like a transplanted flower for many a long week after her arrival in Brittany; she missed the sunny skies and bright blossoms of her Florence home, the acacia tree, the birds and bees; but, more than all the rest, she missed the kind face and pleasant talk of dear old Filippo. It was not that she did not love her new father dearly, but there was more of reverence and less of familiarity in her intercourse with him; and besides, he could never see her for more than an hour or two in the evening, being all the morning taken up with the duties of his parish. To complete her misfortunes, the good-natured old housekeeper could not speak French, and Genevieve only knew a word here and there of the Breton dialect, which Jeannette always used, and which was the common language of the people in that remote part of the country. The dove, therefore, who seemed to mourn for its lost home quite as much as its young mistress, soon became her only companion; and she used to sit with it for hours at the window, watching the autumn rains, and counting the last leaves of summer, as they fell sadly from the trees. This was but cheerless amusement, however, for one so full of life and accustomed to active em-

ployment as Genevieve had been for years ; it is, therefore, little wonder that it often ended in a fit of tears, which Jeannette's caresses and pitying gestures only served to make more violent. One evening Father Ambrose entered the room rather earlier than usual, and he found Genevieve sitting in a disconsolate attitude at the table, her head resting in both her hands. At first he thought she was asleep, but her low sobs soon betrayed that she was weeping, and he called her to his side.

"What is it, my child ?" he said, in a very kind voice.

Genevieve only wept the more at this question, but she made no other answer.

"Has Jeannette been unkind to you ?"

"Oh, no, no", cried Genevieve, eagerly.

"Then what is it, my child ? why do you cry ? Now I will wager", Father Ambrose continued, after a moment's pause, finding Genevieve would not speak, "that you are crying because you think yourself the most unfortunate child in the world ! is it not so, Genevieve ?"

"Yes, sir", said the little girl, very innocently, her tears falling faster at this acknowledgment.

"I thought so", said Father Ambrose, good-humouredly ; "but now tell me, what do you consider your greatest misfortune ?"

"The death of Grandfather Filippo", answered the sobbing child ; "it is so sad to live without him".

"That is very natural", said Father Ambrose, "and it is right and proper you should feel such sorrow, but not that you should abandon yourself

entirely to it, Genevieve. Think, my child, upon the goodness of your Heavenly Father, who, while calling your grandfather to Heaven in order to reward him there for the holy life he led upon Earth, still tempered this act of justice to him by one of mercy towards yourself. He would not leave you desolate, my child; therefore, he gave you to the care of one, not perhaps so well able, but quite as anxious, to make you happy as ever Filippo himself could have been".

"I am happy when you are here", said Genevieve, kissing the priest's hand; "it is only when you are away that I get so sorrowful, thinking of Grandfather Filippo".

"Perhaps you do not try to think of anything else?"

"Ought I to try and think of anything else, Father Ambrose?" asked Genevieve, looking a little surprised.

"Certainly, my child; it is our duty, in all our misfortunes, to submit as cheerfully as we can to the will of divine Providence; and experience teaches that we can do this best by turning our thoughts to other things, and suffering them to dwell as little as possible on the subject of our sorrow".

"But I have nothing else to think of", Genevieve pleaded in a doleful tone; "it is too cold and wet to go out, and then Jeannette does not understand a word that I say to her".

"That last is a misfortune very easily remedied", said Father Ambrose, with a smile.

"How, sir?" cried Genevieve; "do you think she will ever learn French or Italian?"

“ I fear Jeannette may consider herself too old to learn”, answered the father, laughing merrily ; “ but at any rate, Genevieve, you have not this excuse, and with a very little trouble, you might pick up enough of her dialect to carry on a conversation with her”.

“ Do you think so ?” Genevieve doubtfully inquired ; “ it sounds very difficult”.

“ Yet you learned Italian when you were quite a little child ; how did you manage that, Genevieve ?”

“ I used to ask Grandfather Filippo the name of everything I saw ; but that was quite a different thing, for you understand me now, but at Florence nobody spoke French, so I could not help trying to learn Italian”.

“ Well, you will have all the more merit in learning Jeannette’s language, since it will be more an act of will on your part”.

“ I did not know there could be any merit in learning a language, Father Ambrose”.

“ There is no merit in simply learning a language ; but there may be great merit in the motives for which that language is learned. In this instance you will have the merit of obedience, since I wish you to learn it, and of kindness to old Jeannette, who will be greatly delighted by your making the attempt. But more than all the rest, you will have the merit of conforming yourself cheerfully to the will of your Heavenly Father, who has placed you in a situation which makes this knowledge necessary to you”.

“ Not quite necessary”, said Genevieve, innocently ; “ because you speak French, Father Am-

brose, and you can tell Jeannette all that I want her to know”.

“Not quite necessary, but very nearly”, answered Father Ambrose, with a smile; “and, as one good act always leads to another, your knowledge of the Breton dialect will enable you a little later to assist Jeannette in the care of the household, for which she is getting almost too infirm”.

“Oh! I should like that very much indeed”, cried Genevieve, brightening up. “That would really be having something to do. Do you think Jeannette will let me feed the chickens sometimes?”

“I am sure she will, when you know enough of her language to be able to ask her”.

“I saw her going with some corn to the dear little things to-day, and I could not make her understand that I wanted to go with her. That is one reason why I was crying this evening, Father Ambrose”.

“Well, I hope you will be wiser to-morrow, my child, and as soon as you can make old Jeannette understand your wishes, you shall have the care of the chickens; but, in the mean time, I will also take you to see a poor woman who has suffered rather more than you have, Genevieve, but who is willing to suffer still more, if such should be the intentions of Almighty God in her regard”.

“But it was a real misfortune to lose Grandfather Filippo. Was it not?” said Genevieve, earnestly.

“It certainly must have appeared so to you, my child; yet, were I to speak the truth, I should say that sin is the only real misfortune upon Earth”.

“Still people call other things misfortunes”, answered Genevieve. “They say it is a misfortune to be poor, to be sick, to be blind, to be lame, and a hundred other things besides”.

“Yet all these things are sent to us direct from God, who ever rules us for our greater good. If we endure them cheerfully, they will be a subject of great joy and consolation to us at the hour of our death; and even in life it often happens that events which we have dreaded as the greatest misfortunes, have, by the goodness of Divine Providence, become the source of uncounted blessings to us”.

“Then you think it would only seem a misfortune to be blind or lame?” the little girl answered, with some doubt and astonishment in her looks.

“Exactly, my child. The real misfortune would consist in not bearing these evils patiently, in union with the far greater sufferings of our blessed Redeemer”.

“Is the poor woman you are going to take me to see blind and lame, Father Ambrose?”

“Not precisely, my child; but she has had an attack of palsy which has confined her to her bed for years. But this is not her only or her worst misfortune, which is the loss of an only son, who left her many years ago, and has never written to her since; so that she does not know whether he is living or dead”.

“But, then, he may be alive”, answered Genevieve; “so it is not so bad as my misfortune, because I know that dear old Filippo is dead, dead”.

“Worse, a thousand times, my child; for poor Colette has every reason to suppose that if her son

still lives, he has joined a wicked set of men, who employ themselves in robbing the vessels driven on their coast by stress of weather. This is the real trial of her life ; for she also thinks sin the only real misfortune upon Earth, and is of the same opinion as that holy queen, who said, ‘she would rather see her son dead at her feet than know him guilty of a mortal sin’”.

“ Does she weep for him, then, as I did for Grandfather Filippo ?”

“ With far greater reason might she weep, my child, since she mourns not the destruction of the body, but the death of the soul. Yet she does not give way to idle lamentation, but tries to make her sufferings of body and mind useful to her unhappy child, by uniting them to the merits of Jesus Christ, and offering them up for his conversion”.

“ Is that what you call conforming herself to the will of Almighty God ?”

“ Certainly it is ; for it is making the best possible use of the affliction with which she has been visited ; and you also, dear child, may conform yourself to the will of your Heavenly Father by submitting cheerfully to the little inconveniences of your new situation, and to the trouble of learning a difficult language, in order to make yourself useful and agreeable to Jeannette”.

“ I will begin to-morrow ; but no, perhaps I had better begin to-night ; because you know, Father Ambrose, you said the other day, people ought never to put off their conversion even for an hour”.

“ However, I think I may allow you to delay yours until to-morrow with a very safe conscience”, an-

swered Father Ambrose, with a benevolent smile ; “ for it is rather too late to set about language-learning this evening ; so good night, my child. May Jesus and Mary watch over you and bless you”.

Genevieve kept her word ; the next morning she followed Jeannette like her shadow from parlour to kitchen, and from kitchen to poultry-yard, in hopes of extracting a knowledge of the Breton language from her ; and it would be difficult to say whether the old woman was most pleased or provoked by the host of questions showered upon her for this purpose. “ What’s this, Jeannette ? what’s that ?” cried Genevieve, holding up, first, his reverence’s stick, and then his broad-brimmed hat, for inspection. Jeannette answered by repeating the Breton word for the articles in question. “ And what’s this, and this, and that ?” cried Genevieve, producing, first, a toasting-fork, and then a pair of tongs, and then an old tin kettle, which she had discovered in some of the housekeeper’s hiding-places for such worn-out articles. “ But, oh ! dear Jeannette, what is this ?” she continued, as she darted through the open door of the poultry-yard, and without waiting for an answer to her former question, began chasing a little black hen, with the intention of catching it for Jeannette’s closer inspection. The hen, however, was not so willing to be caught, and Genevieve hunted it round and round the yard, and would have done so much longer, unconscious of the terror she was inflicting on the poor animal, had not Jeannette screamed as the top of her lungs to her to let it alone. Genevieve guessed her meaning from the warning gesture with which it was accompanied, and

rather reluctantly obeyed ; she was, however, soon consoled for her failure with the chickens by the discovery of a new-laid egg, so closely concealed in a tuft of grass, that nothing less sharp than the prying eyes of a child could have succeeded in finding it. “ Jeannette, Jeannette”, she cried, in great exultation, quite forgetting that the old woman did not understand a word she was saying, the eternal “ what’s this, and what’s that?” which she had learned from Father Ambrose, being the only Breton she was as yet able to use. “ See what I have found ; the dear, little, white egg ! Do tell me what it is in your language”.

“ Lord bless the child”, said Jeannette, putting on her spectacles ; “ where did she find it ? Why, I have been hunting for a fresh egg for his reverence’s breakfast this fortnight, and never have been able to find one”.

“ But do tell me what it is in Latin—in Breton, I mean”, repeated Genevieve, who had vainly listened to this torrent of words, in hopes of discovering the one which she wanted to learn.

“ It has not been laid an hour, I’ll warrant, for it is quite warm still”, continued Jeannette, putting the egg to her withered cheek, and utterly regardless of Genevieve’s eager face and desire for knowledge.

“ Come in to breakfast, and I will tell you”, said Father Ambrose, who just then had entered the yard.

“ As I live, there is his reverence himself, and his breakfast not ready for him yet. Why, Genevieve, you have made me as idle as yourself this morning”, ejaculated the old woman, bustling back into her kitchen.

But Genevieve was there before her, eager to be initiated into the Breton terms for the various articles required for making crêpe, or crampoosh—a kind of thin cake much used in Brittany, and made of Sarrasin flour and milk.

“What are all these things called in Breton, I wonder”, said Genevieve, rather hopelessly, for she never could remember one word out of ten that Jeannette uttered.

“Little balls of butter—new milk—Sarrasin flour”, repeated Jeannette, as rapidly as the words could come out of her mouth ; “would your reverence be so kind as to take her out of this kitchen?” added the old woman, “for your breakfast will not be ready by sunset, if I have to tell her the name of everything she sees, while I am making the crampoosh”.

“Come, Genevieve”, said the laughing father ; “you shall learn the art of crêpe-making another time ; at present I want you to assist Jeannette by arranging the breakfast things in the parlour”.

Delighted at the idea of being useful, the little girl followed Father Ambrose to the sitting room ; and if she did upset a milk-jug on the table, and tumble a trayful of wooden spoons out of the cupboard, she did not, at any rate, disturb the equanimity of the good father, who continued reading his six-weeks-old newspaper and answering her questions with unruffled composure.

“Father Ambrose, I found such a pretty little egg in the poultry-yard, this morning. What is egg in Breton?”

Father Ambrose told her.

“Jeannette would never have found it, I am sure”, pursued Genevieve; “for it was hidden in a tuft of long grass, where she never even would have thought of looking for it”.

“Well, then”, said Father Ambrose, “I think you may consider it as your own, and have it for breakfast, if you like”.

“Oh, no”, cried Genevieve; “do let me bring it to the poor woman you said you would take me to see to-day”.

“Very well”, said Father Ambrose; and, as Jeannette at this moment made her appearance with a plate of hot crampoosh in each hand, he gave orders that the egg should be added to a basket of goodies which he knew was in preparation for the poor invalid.

Genevieve thought the good father would never have finished his breakfast or his newspaper that morning; and she had arranged and re-arranged the contents of the basket at least twenty times, before he at last took up his hat and stick, and called her to follow him. A very few minutes' walk brought them to the cottage of Colette, which was decidedly the worst and poorest in the village; and Genevieve, who had never entered a Breton dwelling before, was exceedingly astonished at its filthy and miserable appearance. The only light was given from the door, for the broken window had long since been stopped up with rags and rubbish of all kinds, and the fire-place consisted of a huge, rough stone, raised a few inches above the level of the

uneven earthen floor. Upon this primitive-looking hearth a fire had already been kindled; but, unluckily, the wood was green, and had so filled the hut with smoke that it was some minutes before Genevieve discovered its poor inmate stretched upon an open bedstead—a mark of the last degree of poverty in a Breton cottage, where a “lit clos” is almost always to be discovered upon one side of the fire-place.

“Well”, said Father Ambrose, groping his way to the fire, “you have plenty of smoke here this morning. Who lighted your fire, Colette?”

“Susan lit it for me, your reverence”, answered the poor invalid, in very good French; “but the wood is green, and she forgot to leave the door open as she went out, so I have been almost blinded by the smoke”.

“That was very careless”, said Father Ambrose; “she should remember you are not able to get up and shut it for yourself”.

“Susan is a little forgetful sometimes”, said Colette, mildly; “but she is very kind-hearted, and is always running in and out to see if she can be useful”.

“I have brought my little Italian to visit you”, continued Father Ambrose. “Genevieve, where is the beautiful egg you were to bring for Colette’s breakfast?”

Genevieve was too shy to speak, but she fumbled in her basket until she discovered the egg, which she gave to Father Ambrose, whispering at the same time a request that he would allow her to boil it.

This was readily granted; and a faggot of dried wood having been discovered in a distant corner of the cottage, and placed on the hearth by his reverence's own hands, Genevieve proceeded with her cookery, and after some assistance from Father Ambrose, succeeded in setting before the poor invalid a comfortable breakfast, consisting of crêpe, new milk, and of course the rather too-well boiled egg, which she exhorted her to eat before it grew cold. Colette obeyed this injunction, less, perhaps, from appetite than from kindness to the eager child, who was now busied about her, in total forgetfulness of her first feeling of shyness, or of anything, indeed, but the wish to be useful to the helpless creature before her.

"Ah, dear sir", said the poor woman, with tears in her eyes, "how this little one reminds me of the time when I also had a child as young and as innocent as herself. What would I not give to know that he was so still!"

"Courage, my good friend", returned the father; "never despond; and remember that if God is often glorified by the innocence of the child, he is yet more frequently manifested in the repentance of the sinner. The Good Shepherd yet dwells among us, to seek out the sheep that was lost, and to bring him back to the fold".

"How I love to hear you say so", said poor Colette, smiling through her tears; "who knows but this Good Shepherd, this sweet Jesus, will some day speak to the heart of my son, and lead him back from the evil paths in which he has wandered so long".

“Do not doubt it, my friend ; or if you do so, go and tell your doubts to Mary. She, of mothers the most afflicted, will not refuse to listen to the afflictions of a mother ; remind her of all that Jesus suffered on the cross, of all that she endured at its foot, and ask her if such anguish is to be in vain. Cease not to weep before her—cease not to commend your lost one to her care—weary her with your prayers. But, good God ! what do I say ? you might as well attempt to drain the ocean as to weary the heart of this good mother. No ; the more earnestly you pray to her, the more tenderly will she incline to hear you ; the greater your importunity, the deeper her solicitude ; the more unceasing your cries for help, the more unwearied her endeavours to assist you. Oh, trust me, she will obtain all that you ask for from the heart of her divine Son : for she, on Earth, refused Him nothing, neither will he now deny her anything in Heaven”.

“God is my witness”, said Colette, lifting up her hands and eyes to Heaven, “that on Earth I desire neither riches, nor health, nor happiness, but only the conversion of my only child”.

“And she whose sweetest title is ‘refuge of sinners’, will obtain it for you, my poor Colette. It may be at the hour when you least expect it ; it may be in the moment of his utmost need”.

“I am so sorry for you”, said Genevieve, throwing her arms round Colette’s neck. “Do not cry so, dear Colette”, she continued, wiping the poor woman’s streaming eyes with her white muslin veil ; “Mary will certainly hear you ; every one told me

so—Mimi, and Grandfather Filippo, and Father Ambrose; and I always found it to be true, for she used to send some one or other to take care of me just at the instant when I thought myself quite lost and alone in the world”.

“You must ask her, then, to listen to me”, said Colette, kissing the little girl’s hands gratefully.

“That I will”, said Genevieve, innocently; “and I know she will not refuse me, because she is my own, *own* mother; and Grandfather Filippo used to say one’s own mother never would deny anything to her little ones that it was proper to give them”.

“Mary is indeed the orphan’s own and only mother”, said Colette, smiling.

“I do not know whether I am an orphan or not; but I know Mary has been my only mother ever since I was quite a little baby”.

“Come, Genevieve”, said Father Ambrose; “it is time to be going. I have a long walk before me this morning, and I will leave you at home before I set out”.

“Oh, Father Ambrose”, cried Genevieve, “do let me come every day and sit with poor Colette, and let me make her fire and give her her breakfast and dinner, and do everything for her”.

“I cannot let you stay with her all day long, Genevieve; but you may sit with her every day for an hour or two, and read to her while she is knitting, if you like it”.

“I should like it very much”, said Genevieve, timidly; “but I do not think I can read French very well; and perhaps I shall tire Colette with all my mistakes”.

“Not at all”, said Colette, smiling ; “I shall be very glad to listen to you, and I will stop you whenever you make a mistake ; so you will soon learn to read it as well as you speak it”.

“That will just do”, said Father Ambrose, gaily ; “you shall teach her French, and Jeannette Breton. I think you will have plenty to do for the future, Genevieve. So now let us get home as fast as we can. Good-by, Colette”.

“Good-by, your reverence”, said Colette ; but Genevieve lingered one moment longer to pick up the poor woman’s knitting-needles, and to settle her pillows, and then ran after the father, who had already walked a few yards down the street, conversing with one of the villagers he had met in the meanwhile.

“What was that old man saying to you, Father Ambrose ?” asked Genevieve, when the villager left them a few minutes afterwards.

“Why do you want to know, Genevieve ? What makes you ask that question ?”

“Because I thought he was speaking of me, Father Ambrose—at least he looked as if he was”.

“He asked why you were dressed all in white, and I told him it was, I believed, because you were a child dedicated to our Blessed Lady from your birth”.

“What did he say then, Father Ambrose ?”

“What did he say ?” repeated the father, smiling ; and then, after thinking for a moment, he added : “Well, he said he had guessed it before asking the question, and that the diamond cross and

the white dress made him think of a lily in the morning dew".

Genevieve coloured scarlet, but she did not speak again until Father Ambrose asked her what she was thinking of.

"I was thinking I was very vain", she answered, hesitating a little, "for liking the man to say what you told me, because a lily is such a very pretty flower".

"There is no reason to be vain about it", said Father Ambrose, composedly; "for the merit, if there be any, belongs rather to the white muslin and diamond cross than to yourself".

"That is very true", said Genevieve; "but do you know, Father Ambrose, I always have more vain thoughts when I am dressed in white muslin than when I have my every-day frock on?"

"When you have such thoughts, my child, it would be worth your while to consider how little real cause there is for them. Cotton, in the first instance, is the gift of God; and it was neither your skill nor industry which transformed it from the raw material as it grows on the tree, into the delicate fabric of which your dress is made".

"But there was another reason why I thought I was vain, Father Ambrose, only I don't much like to tell you, because it sounds so foolish".

"Never mind about its being foolish, Genevieve, because, perhaps, I can help you to make it wiser another time".

"Well", said Genevieve, making a desperate effort to complete her confession, "just before you called

for your hat and stick to go out this morning, I took a peep in Jeannette's little looking-glass, and I did think I looked very nice—my own self I mean, as well as the white muslin. Was not that very foolish, Father Ambrose?"

Father Ambrose smiled. "The folly does not consist in simply thinking one's-self good-looking, but rather in indulging in any airs or self-conceit about it; and the reason is very plain, Genevieve; we have had as little to do with the formation of our face or figure as with the manufacture of the materials that compose our dress. He, who made us out of nothing, created likewise the lily and the rose; and these poor flowers might just as reasonably boast of their beauty and perfume as we of any gifts, mental or bodily, with which he has endowed us".

"But don't you think people like one better for being pretty, Father Ambrose?" said Genevieve, after a pause.

"Just at first perhaps they do, but in the long run, what do you think Colette will care whether you are pretty or ugly, provided you are kind and gentle to her?"

"Then there is no use in being pretty, I suppose, if it does not make one's friends love one more?"

"There is use in all the gifts of God, my child, if we would but employ them in the spirit in which he sends them".

"What! even in ugliness, Father Ambrose?" said Genevieve.

"Perhaps even more in ugliness than in beauty, Genevieve. The plain child may find both merit and

happiness in her infirmity, by submitting cheerfully to it, and crushing all feelings of envy or dislike to her more gifted companions”.

“And the pretty child, Father Ambrose?”

“The pretty child may also acquire much merit in the sight of her Heavenly Father, by carefully repressing the feelings of vanity and pertness, which personal beauty sometimes causes to its possessor, and by constantly bearing in mind that the Creator alone has a right to be praised in the creatures he has made”.

“But I suppose one ought not to dress nicely if it gives one vain thoughts”, said Genevieve.

“I think in this matter young girls especially should try and imitate the example of their blessed Mother; for she, I doubt not, was always neat and clean in her person, because it is no part of virtue to be slovenly or untidy; but at the same time, we may rest assured that, in her modest and simple attire, Mary employed none of those little arts which women sometimes resort to by way of increasing their good looks, and which, generally speaking, have quite a contrary effect to the one they intend”.

“Was Madonna Mary dressed like a rich or poor person, Father Ambrose?”

“Like a poor person, my child; because poverty was both by necessity and choice her station in life. As a general rule, it is ever best for the rich to dress like the rich, because thus they give employment to thousands of artizans, who would otherwise be left destitute; while yet more positively the poor should dress like the poor, both in honour of their state,

made holy by the example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and also to avoid the folly of spending in idle vanity the money which would otherwise be laid by as a provision for their old age".

"Well, then, Father Ambrose", said Genevieve, earnestly, "I ought not to wear this diamond cross, because once Ginditta told me only rich people can afford such things".

"No, my child", said Father Ambrose, after the pause of a moment, "the person who gave it to you had, doubtless, some wise motive in wishing you to wear it, and therefore I think it your duty to continue to do so".

"But, Father Ambrose, if you must know the truth, I am a great deal more vain of the cross than of the white frock and veil, because, when I go to church, the villagers look so surprised, and stare at me so. Now, do you not think I ought to take it off?" added the little girl, anxiously.

"Genevieve", said Father Ambrose, "it sometimes requires a greater degree of control over our passions, to be able to use a thing with moderation, than to give it up altogether. Now, I should say this was just a case in which, by a little self-denial, you might still continue to wear the cross, and yet get rid of the foolish thoughts it may sometimes have suggested".

"But the thoughts will come when I see people looking at it, and I cannot help their coming", answered Genevieve, with another blush.

"I do not suppose you can prevent their coming, though you may always try and prevent dwelling

upon them. But I also meant, Genevieve, that you might easily prevent its being so conspicuous an object, by wearing it more among the folds of your dress".

"I will put it in my sash", said Genevieve, placing it in the band of her apron ; "see, Father Ambrose—no one can catch even a glimpse of it now".

"It is close to your heart, however", said Father Ambrose, with a smile ; "that is ever the place where the cross should be ; and believe me, dear child, the day will come at last, when you will find that, bright as are these diamonds, a far more brilliant crown has been reserved by your Heavenly Father even for such a simple little act of self-denial as this seems to you now".

Genevieve kissed the good father's hand, and walked on for some time in silence, yet feeling brighter and happier than she had done since Filippo's death ; at last she said :

"There is much more sunshine to-day than there was yesterday, Father Ambrose ; it looks quite like spring weather this morning".

"The spring weather is from within, Genevieve, I fancy", said Father Ambrose ; "our good actions are the real sunshine of the human heart".

"But I do not feel as if I had done anything particularly good to-day", said Genevieve, with great simplicity.

"At any rate", said Father Ambrose, "you have, I hope, tried to perform the duties your Heavenly Father has imposed upon you, by adapting yourself to the circumstances in which he has placed you ;

and, believe me, when we do this to the best of our ability, we approach nearer to the real virtue of the loving heart, than tears, or prayers, or mortifications could bring us”.

“What is that real virtue, Father Ambrose?” Genevieve asked, as she paused at the door of the cottage.

“Perfect reliance on the goodness of our Heavenly Father, and perfect resignation to the decrees of his adorable providence”.

Genevieve entered the house, and had finished a page in her copy-book, and perfectly studied a lesson in her catechism, before Father Ambrose returned for his dinner.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Most sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us!”

As Father Ambrose had foreseen, Genevieve's first visit to Colette was soon followed by a great many others ; for she was naturally of a most affectionate disposition, and the instant she perceived that her presence gave pleasure to the poor invalid, she became unwearied in her attendance. All her former unwillingness to face the cold, wet weather of a Breton winter seemed to vanish in her anxiety not to omit any little act of kindness it was in her power to perform ; regularly, therefore, every day, wet or fine, as soon as the early Mass was ended, she walked over to the cottage ; so that the villagers were in

the habit of saying they knew exactly what o'clock it was, the instant they saw the little white maiden at the corner of the street.

It was now her daily business to light Colette's fire, and get ready her breakfast : after which she read French to her out of some good book lent for the purpose by Father Ambrose, and finished her day's work by assisting Susanette in making the poor woman's bed, and mending and washing her clothes. It was generally almost noon before all this was brought to a conclusion ; so she had to run back as fast as she could, in order to be in time for Father Ambrose's early dinner hour ; and the afternoon was spent in learning her catechism, feeding the chickens, working, and trying to converse with Jeannette in Breton. She now discovered that she had plenty of occupation, as well as amusement, in this new way of life ; it is no wonder, therefore, that she soon found herself perfectly happy, and that she was always ready to greet Father Ambrose with a bright smile on his return in the evening, instead of the swelled eyes and weary looks with which she formerly met him. Notwithstanding all this, she never forgot her dear old grandfather, but she had learned to think of him with a kind of quiet feeling, which had something of sweetness in it, as well as of regret ; and there were even times when she did not feel as if she had lost him quite, she felt so sure that he was happy, and watching her from Heaven.

As spring wore away, however, and the festival of St. John rapidly approached, Genevieve could

not help feeling more depressed than she had done for a long time. St. John happened to be the patron saint of the village in which she now lived, and while young and old were descanting on the glories of the "Pardon" to be held in his honour, Genevieve shed many unseen tears over the day which had begun so happily last summer, and ended, alas ! so fatally for Filippo.

"Susan wants to know whether you will go with her to see all the fine sights of the 'Pardon' to-morrow?"* said the old house-keeper to Genevieve, who could now understand and speak Breton tolerably well.

"I would much rather stay at home, and pray for my dear Filippo", answered the little girl, bending her head yet lower over the book she was reading.

"You can pray for him at Mass", answered Jeanette ; "it will do you good to have a little amusement".

"I don't want amusement", said Genevieve, with tears in her eyes ; "least of all on such a day".

"But Father Ambrose wishes you to go", persisted the old housekeeper ; "he was telling me so this morning".

Genevieve made no further opposition, for the wish of Father Ambrose was ever law to her ; so the next day she suffered Susan to take possession of her, and to bring her wheresoever she would, and though her heart was sad enough, she could not help feeling amused at the novelty and strangeness of the scenes around her. It was a fair day as well

* Pardon—equivalent to "wake" in England, or *Pattern* in Ireland.

as a "Pardon", and the itinerant vendors of tapes, ribbons, crucifixes, books, and pious pictures, were mixed up indiscriminately with crowds of pilgrims from every part of the country, the endless variety of whose costume was a source of unceasing wonder to Genevieve. Some were dressed in black, some in violet and white, some in green jackets and red sashes, others again in crimson and white; and as they passed each group, Susanette named the part of the country from whence they came as readily, Genevieve said, as if she had seen it written on their foreheads.

"But, dear Susanette, what are they doing to those young girls? See, that woman is cutting off all their hair. Is she not very ill-natured to do so?"

"Not at all", said Susanette, composedly; "she pays them for it, of course, and then she takes it to Paris to make wigs for the fine ladies who have no hair of their own".

"The fine ladies of Paris should have none of my hair", said Genevieve, laughing. "I would rather keep it myself; would not you, Susanette?"

"Why, no", said Susan; "I don't care about my hair; but it is too short to be cut this year: last St. John's, they gave me twenty sous for it".

"Pity upon me—pity upon me!" cried a voice in the crowd, addressing himself to Genevieve, who seemed to him the richer of the two young girls.

"Oh, Susan", cried Genevieve, "have you nothing for this poor man? See, he is blind of one eye, and lame besides".

"I have not a sou", said Susan; "I gave the

only one I had to a beggarwoman with five children, up by the church”.

“What shall we do then, Susan? We must give him something”.

“Cut off your hair”, said Susanette, laughing.

Genevieve coloured and looked irresolute; but just then the poor man’s “pity on me, pity on me”, reached her ear again through the tumult of the crowd, and she caught hold of Susan’s arm, crying:

“Come along directly to the hair woman, dear Susan; the poor man must have some relief”.

“Twenty sous for a head of hair; twenty sous, twenty sous—a little fortune for a Breton maiden”, cried the hair purchaser, whose experienced eye instantly detected customers in the two young girls now approaching her stall.

“Twenty sous”, cried Susan. “No, indeed; my friend shall not part with her hair for so little as that. You have nothing half so fine or so long in your basket. See here”, she continued, taking off Genevieve’s veil, and unbinding her long hair; “such a head as that is worth more than twenty sous; you will not find its like in Brittany, go where you will to seek it”.

Perhaps the woman thought so too, for golden hair was rather a rarity, and always fetched a high price in the market; so she said:

“Twenty sous and a fine red handkerchief”; but seeing that Susan still shook her head, she went on bidding rapidly: “Twenty-two, twenty-five—seven—thirty sous”.

“Thirty; do let it be, dear Susan”, cried Genevieve; for a crowd was collecting round the stall,

and she felt distressed at the manner in which she was stared at.

No sooner were the words out of her mouth than the woman seized her by the hair, and before Genevieve was well aware of what was being done, the bright locks were severed from her head, tied up like a wisp of straw, and flung into a basket already half filled with similar articles.

“It is a great deal too cheap”, murmured Susan; “you would have got thirty-five for your hair, if you had only had a little patience, Genevieve”.

“Never mind”, said the little girl, good-humouredly, replacing her veil; “it is quite as much as it was worth, Susanette. Here is the money, poor man”, she continued, handing her dearly-earned treasure to the beggar, who, notwithstanding his lameness, had managed to keep close to the young girls all this time, and had, of course, heard every word which passed between them. He received the money with a look which had quite as much of astonishment as gratitude in it, and instead of thanking her, he said, in a quick, marked manner:

“Put up that cross, young girl; it is no fit ornament in such a place as this”.

Genevieve looked down, and perceived that the cross had escaped from her belt, and was hanging loose round her neck. She replaced it as quickly as she could, and then the beggar moved a little aside to enable her and her friend to escape out of the crowd.

“Who were those two men standing close to the beggar, Susan?” she asked, as they pursued their walk. “From what part of the country do they come?”

“What men, Geneviève? I did not see any men”.

“There they are again, on the other side of the street: those two men with great sticks in their hands”.

“Oh, with their ‘penbas’. Let me see. The men with blue caps and bare feet. Heaven defend us from them!” ejaculated Susan, crossing herself devoutly, and hurrying her companion forward.

“Why, what harm is there in them, Susan, that you look so terrified?”

“They are wreckers from Kerlouan”, answered Susan, with a shudder.

“Wreckers!” repeated Genevieve; “what does that mean?”

“It means that they rob the vessels wrecked upon their coast, and it is even said they sometimes murder the poor sailors in order to take possession of all they can procure from their ships!”

“Horrible!” said Genevieve; “I hope we shall not meet them any more”.

“So do I, I am sure”, echoed Susan; “where are you going now, Genevieve?”

“To sit with Colette, Susan; Father Ambrose said I might do so after I had walked through the fair”.

“Very well”, answered Susan; “I will call for you when it is time to join the procession for lighting the bonfire; so mind you are ready, Genevieve”.

The young Bretonne was punctual to her engagement; and, at six o’clock precisely, she and Genevieve fell in with the procession, as it proceeded up the hill, on the very summit of which the materials for lighting the bonfire had been arranged. This

was always a religious ceremony at the village of St. John's, so it was attended by the village authorities—the clergy in their robes—the banners and crosses of the church, and vast numbers of people and pilgrims from all parts of the country, walking two and two, and chanting hymns in honour of their patron saint. All this was not very magnificent certainly, but it was sufficient to inspire the devotion of this simple-minded people; and even Genevieve, who had been accustomed in Italy to religious processions on a richer scale, felt an awe she had never known before, when, after reaching her station on the top of the hill, she turned and looked down upon the multitudes still ascending, with bare heads and long hair streaming on the wind, while they raised the burden of their song to Heaven. Of course they proceeded very slowly; so it was nearly night before they all stood in a living circle round the bonfire, which was then lighted up at a signal made by the firing of a cannon. Almost directly afterwards all the surrounding hills were illuminated in a similar manner, and Genevieve was so busy watching the pretty effect of these bright lights, which showed like crowns of fire through the increasing darkness, that Susan spoke to her twice before she received an answer.

“I am going home”, she said at last; “Father Ambrose desired me to do so the instant he and the other clergy left the hill”.

“I shall not go just yet”, rejoined Susan; “I want to run to the highest point of the hill to try if I can see nine fires at once, Genevieve”.

“I think I could count nine where I am”, said Genevieve; “only I must not stay to do so, for

there is Father Ambrose half way down the hill already”.

“ Stay a moment, Genevieve, and tell me where I could get some wallflowers for Colette, she is so fond of them, and I promised to bring her some tomorrow for the feast of St. John, who is her birthday saint”.

“ I will bring you some for her”, cried Genevieve ; “ I saw plenty the other day growing among the tumbled-down walls of the old castle by the sea-side”.

“ That is a long way off”, said Susan ; “ you will never have time to go there before Mass, Genevieve”.

“ Yes, but I shall though”, answered Genevieve ; “ I will get up before daylight and run all the way, and I must run now too, or Father Ambrose will be at home before me”.

“ Well, good night, and do not forget the wallflowers”, cried Susan ; and, as she turned to pursue her way further up the hill, she met the very two men whom she had described, in the morning, as “ wreckers” to her companion.

“ They must have heard every word we were saying. I wonder what could have made them so curious”, thought she. The idea puzzled her a little, but was soon forgotten in her anxiety to discover the precise point at which the greatest possible number of bonfires could be descried at the same moment.

Genevieve did not lie awake all night, as people sometimes do when they intend to get up very early in the morning ; on the contrary, she slept quite soundly, and never opened her eyes until the first gray light of dawn had peeped in at her window. Then she sprang up, and dressed herself as quickly

as she could, but it was some minutes before she could adjust her veil comfortably on her head, for want of the long hair to which she used formerly to pin it ; and this little difficulty so occupied her attention that, for the first time in her life, she forgot to hang the diamond cross round her neck before she went out.

It was a lovely morning ; the lark was in the heavens, and the broom was brightening in masses of gold over the hills, and Genevieve looked and listened, and walked with double speed, as if timing her movements to the gladness of her own heart and of all things around her. Half an hour brought her to the ruins, which stood on the top of a desolate rock beetling far out into the ocean ; and she immediately began to scramble up and down in search of the flowers she had promised for Colette. They were not difficult to find, for they grew in rich masses on every part of the old walls, and Genevieve had almost filled her basket, when both her arms were seized by some one from behind, a rude hand was laid upon her mouth to prevent her from screaming, and a voice said in her ear :

“ You shall not be hurt if you do as you are desired ; where is that cross which you wore yesterday at the fair ? ”

“ Round my neck, I suppose ”, sobbed Genevieve ; “ let me go, and I will give it to you ”.

“ Not just yet, little maiden ”, said one of the robbers, coolly ; “ by your leave, we will first tie you to this tree, and then we shall have time to escape before any of your people are likely to discover you ”.

Poor Genevieve was a great deal too frightened

to think of making any opposition, beyond tears and entreaties, to such an arrangement ; so they had little trouble in binding her fast to a young oak tree by means of a rope, which they passed several times round her waist. While this operation was in progress, she had plenty of time to perceive they were the identical men whom Susan had pointed out to her as “wreckers” the day before ; and her terror was greatly increased by the recollection of the unscrupulous manner in which they were said to murder as well as rob.

“Now, where is the cross, little lassie?” said one of the men, in a mocking tone ; “make haste, for our boat is waiting, and we have not much time to lose”.

Genevieve’s arms were now free, but in vain she felt for the cross ; it was neither round her neck nor in her belt.

“It is not here, it is not here”, she cried, wringing her hands in the excess of her terror ; “I must have left it at home this morning”.

“You lie, you little wretch”, said one of the robbers, furiously tearing off the unhappy child’s veil, and, with a long, slender knife, cutting in two the ribbon that bound her waist ; but no jewel fell from it as he had expected, and the baffled villain, angry at his disappointment, made a second thrust at Genevieve, which would probably have proved fatal, had not the knife been dashed out of his hand by a vigorous blow dealt from behind. The next instant Genevieve’s friend, the beggar, leaped over a low wall that had hitherto concealed him from view, and laid his heavy penbas, or stick, about him with a

strength and determination truly wonderful in a man who had been both blind and lame so short a time before. Both the robbers were upon him in an instant, and Genevieve watched the combat that ensued with a terrible interest. At first he appeared a match for his enemies ; but, by degrees, his strength began to fail, a heavy blow from a penbas caused him to stagger, and, before he could recover his feet, a knife was plunged into his side, and Genevieve uttered a dismal shriek as he fell to the ground. The sight of his blood seemed to bring the angry men to their senses.

“What business had you to use the knife, Pierre?” said one of them, gruffly ; “you have made a pretty day’s work of it : the man is dying”.

“Let him die”, said the other, savagely ; “I always knew that he would turn traitor at last”.

“Fly”, cried the beggar, in a scarcely audible voice ; “I wish you no evil, begone while there is yet time—the tide is running fast out”.

“I am sorry for you, Etienne”, said the first man ; “but it could not be helped : why would you meddle in what did not concern you ?”

“I vowed to save the child”, said the beggar, vehemently ; “begone—in ten minutes your boat will be left high and dry upon the sands”.

“It is too true”, said the man, reluctantly ; “we have no time to lose : but at least, Etienne, you must confess it was all your own fault”.

“Yes, yes, it was all my own fault”, said the beggar, bitterly ; “I have sinned with you, and I have perished by you : it was all my own fault, indeed”.

“Say, at least, you forgive us”, said the man who appeared the less ruffian of the two.

“I do, I do”, ejaculated the beggar, impatiently ; “now begone, and let me die in peace”.

To do them justice, it was with some appearance of unwillingness the two men obeyed this injunction ; but at last, to Genevieve’s great relief, they turned decidedly away, and were soon lost to sight among the ruins of the castle.

A long silence ensued. Genevieve could scarcely believe her senses that she was safe ; she tried to pray, but it seemed as if she could not form the words even in her own mind ; her head reeled—everything seemed to swim before her eyes : she saw the beggar, and heard his groans, but it was as if she only looked and listened in a dream. Gradually, however, this state of torpor seemed to pass away, and she was yet further roused by the pitiable moans of the wounded man, and his entreaties for water.

“There is a fountain close at hand, and I cannot reach it ; child, have pity on me, and bring me even one single drop”.

“Alas, I cannot move”, cried poor Genevieve ; “they have bound me so fast to the tree”.

“There is a knife at your feet ; can you not reach it ?” said the beggar.

Genevieve looked down, and to her great joy perceived the knife, which had so nearly proved fatal to herself, lying on the ground, just where the robber had dropt it on the first assault of his antagonist. With some little difficulty she succeeded in stooping low enough to reach it, and after cutting the rope

by which she was held prisoner, she flew to the little stream pointed out to her by the beggar, dipt her torn veil into it, and then brought it all dripping wet, and laid it on the lips and forehead of the wounded man. This seemed to revive him, but the more his consciousness increased, the more terrible appeared to be the despair in which he was plunged.

“To die thus”, he groaned, “like a dog, unrepenting, unforgiven—child, child, a thousand worlds like this one would I give, but for one hope of pardon in the next”.

The tone of hopelessness in which this was said struck a chill into Genevieve’s inmost heart, but she answered quickly: “Let us ask our Heavenly Father to forgive you”, and kneeling down, scarcely conscious of what she was doing, she folded her hands together, and said the “Our Father” up aloud. The earnest accents seemed to soothe the poor wretch, and he listened attentively until she came to the words “and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us”; then he groaned aloud, and stopped her, saying: “No, no, there is no hope for me—no man ever injured me, and I alone am guilty to God and man”. “There is hope for every one who repents”, persisted Genevieve; “Father Ambrose always says so”.

“Would to God he were here!” cried the man; “would to God he were here! Stay with me, child; do not leave me to die alone!”

“I shall be back directly”, cried Genevieve; “I will only go and bring Father Ambrose to comfort you”.

“Do not go, do not go”, the poor wretch entreated; “I shall die in your absence”.

“No, no”, cried Genevieve, “you will not die ; say one prayer to Mary ; she is the refuge of sinners ; she will guard you until I come back”.

“Pray to her yourself then”, said he, despairingly, “for she will never listen to such as me”.

“She will, she will”, repeated Genevieve ; and then, without waiting to hear more, she flew as fast as she could across the fields, all the time unconsciously repeating : “Mary, mother, pray for him ; Mary, mother, do not let him die !”

She was at Father Ambrose’s cottage in a wonderfully short time, but the door and windows were all closed, and Genevieve guessed from this that its inmates were gone to church ; thither, therefore, she instantly directed her footsteps, and, quite forgetful of the sanctity of the place, the terrified child rushed through the crowds of staring people, crying out : “Father Ambrose ! Father Ambrose ! where are you, Father Ambrose ?”

He was already at the altar-steps, but almost before he heard the cry of anguish with which his name was uttered, Genevieve was within the sanctuary, clinging to his vestments, and repeating wildly :

“Make haste, or he will be dead ! Make haste, or he will be dead !”

“Who will be dead ?” asked the astonished priest ; and then, seeing the blood which stained her frock : “Good God ! what is the matter, child ? are you wounded ?”

“No, no”, said Genevieve, “but a man is wounded and dying at the castle”.

Father Ambrose waited to hear no more ; he did not even remove his vestments, but accompanied

Genevieve just as he was from the church, followed by many of the people, who had caught the words "wounded and dying", and were, of course, anxious for the safety both of the priest and the child. Eager as the latter was, she could scarcely keep pace with the rapid walk of her companion; more than once she felt as if she were going to faint, but she would not complain, for she remembered that the salvation of a fellow-creature was at stake, and this terrible thought renewed her to fresh exertion.

"There he is! there he is!" she cried at last; "oh, Father Ambrose, if he should be dead!"

But he was not dead, though evidently in a dying state; and while Father Ambrose spoke to him, the villagers prepared a kind of hurdle, on which to bear him to the village. To the astonishment of all parties, as soon as the beggar was informed of their intention, he said, in an imploring tone: "Take me to my mother's; take me to my mother's".

"Your mother's!" repeated several astonished voices.

"Her name is Gaspard", he answered, faintly.

"Just Heaven!" exclaimed Father Ambrose, "he is the son of Colette".

Three months after these events, Father Ambrose stood at the door of a pretty cottage in quite a different part of Brittany from that in which his own parish was situated; he was conversing with a tall and graceful-looking lady in widow weeds, and the old Bretonne peasant on whose arm she leaned, occasionally joined in the conversation.

"You have established our friends completely,

madame", said the priest ; " I rejoice at the prospect of happiness they have now before them".

" I have but fulfilled the wishes of my late husband", said the countess ; " as soon as ever he was convinced of the innocence of Pierre, he made every possible exertion for the reversal of his sentence, and almost with his last breath he charged me to reinstate him in his former office on the estate. I have done this most willingly, yet I am conscious", she added, sighing, " that no wealth I could bestow would be sufficient to atone for the injustice with which he has been treated by my family".

" Pierre thinks otherwise, madame ; he assured me, when I saw him yesterday, that he never can be too grateful to God for the lesson by which his pride has been humbled to the very dust".

" His wife tells me he has profited by it, and that he is now as meek and humble as he once was hard and haughty of heart. As to Genevieve, I have provided entirely for her, and I have been much pleased by her generous recollection of her Italian friends ; for she begged hard that the diamond cross might be sold, and the money divided betwixt Ginditta and Petronilla. I have consented willingly to this arrangement in the first instance ; but in the second, I confess I have only yielded out of gratitude to the memory of dear old Filippo".

As she finished speaking, the door of the cottage opened, and Genevieve came flying out into the garden. " Oh, Father Ambrose, I am so glad you are come ; I have been watching for you all the morning".

“The most unfortunate child in the world, I suppose”, said Father Ambrose, smiling.

“No, indeed; the very happiest”, said Genevieve; “I have got a father and mother and a real little sister”.

“And what is better still, my child, you are not deserted by your Father in Heaven, who now, as ever, watches over and protects you; nor by your good mother, Mary, who will not forget to pray for you, as long as you do not forget to invoke her assistance”.

“Genevieve”, said Madame de Serrant, smiling, “I have brought a person to see you, who is about as old an acquaintance as myself”.

Genevieve grew first very red, then very pale, and looked irresolutely now at the countess and then at the old Bretonne, until this last, unable to keep silence any longer, sobbed out: “Genevieve, Genevieve, do you not remember your poor old nurse?” “Mimi!” cried Genevieve, with a scream of delight, as she flew into her arms.

What happened during the next half hour Genevieve never could very well tell; all was confusion in her mind, and the first thing she remembered distinctly was finding herself in the cottage parlour, seated between her mother and Mimi, while the real little sister, who was a child of a few years old, rested lovingly on her bosom. Pierre was reading a printed paper which Father Ambrose had given him.

“It is as I thought”, said he at last, folding it up with a deep sigh; “the unhappy man declares that

it was the pride and harshness with which I treated him whilst he acted as my clerk, that, after his theft of the diamonds, suggested to him the fatal revenge of concealing a portion of them in my house”.

“What horrible cruelty !” cried Elise ; “how little did I think, when I saw him for the last time that very morning, that he it was who had destroyed our good name”.

“It always grieves me to think that the count should have died under the impression that I was a villain”, said Pierre, with a sigh.

“You may console yourself then, my good friend, for my late husband often confessed to me, that he had all along had strong suspicion of the honesty of Gaspard ; and he no longer retained a doubt upon the subject after reading the confession, which the unhappy man made, at his own desire, before the maire of the village in which he died”.

“There is one thing more which I want very much to know”, she continued, turning to Father Ambrose ; “did he recognize Genevieve by the diamond cross on her neck ?”

“No, madam. He remembered the cross perfectly well, and it was for this reason I had it sent to you for inspection ; but his interference in Genevieve’s favour was solely an act of gratitude for the charity she showed him, while believing him to be poor and blind”.

“I am sure he looked exactly as if he were really blind”, said Genevieve. “What made him disguise himself in such a manner, Father Ambrose ?”

“It is accounted for in his printed declaration”,

returned the father. "God, who had designs of mercy upon him, filled his heart with a longing desire to ask the forgiveness of his mother, and he came to the village for this purpose; but he was obliged to do so in disguise, as he had rendered himself obnoxious to law by many acts of violence committed since the stealing of this diamond necklace".

"But if I remember rightly, Colette Gaspard is a native of this village", said the countess. "How, then, did he come to seek her and find her among you?"

"The neighbours have told me since", said Elise, "that she disappeared from the village about the same time, or a little later than I did".

"She had received some information", Father Ambrose resumed, "which gave her reason to suppose, that directly after Pierre's condemnation, her son had gone to join the people of Kerlouan, who, justly or unjustly, are accused of making their living chiefly by the plunder of wrecks, and similar acts of violence and fraud. In hopes of reclaiming him, the poor creature tried to follow him thither, but had not gone further than our village before she was seized with paralysis, induced probably by fatigue and sorrow. On the other hand, he was in the habit of roaming over the whole country, now in one disguise, now in another; but, being attached to his mother, he never entirely lost sight of her; and even managed once to enter the cottage and converse with her, under the appearance of a shipwrecked sailor, his face being almost concealed by a broad, black patch".

“You are a wonderful child, my little Genevieve”, said the countess, with a smile. “What perils you have run, and by how strange a chance you have escaped them all”.

“I like not that word ‘chance’, madame”, said Father Ambrose, shaking his head. “Believe me, there is no such thing in this world as chance. It was not by chance that Genevieve first lost herself in the streets of Rome, and afterwards wept over the death-bed of her only protector at Florence; for if she had remained either with you, or poor Filippo, she never could have been the means of discovering the innocence of her father, by procuring the dying confession of the man who had calumniated him. It was not by chance that Filippo, in his saintly simplicity, chose for her portion the poverty of a Breton cottage, rather than the riches of a grand-ducal palace. It was not by chance that some compunctious visitings moved Gaspard to come and seek pardon of his mother, asking alms in order to conceal himself more perfectly; or that Genevieve won his heart by a little act of charity, sacrificing her hair in order to procure him relief: or that he met two of his own associates from Kerlouan, who revealed to him their intention of robbing the child, while he, on his side, resolved to defend her with his life: for which good purpose he followed them at a distance, and concealed himself among the ruins of the castle. It was not by chance that Genevieve forgot the diamond cross that morning, and so preserved the token, by which you afterwards recognized her as the lost child of your

adoption. It was not by chance that Colette, who, for so many years, had made the conversion of her son the sole object of her prayers and tears, received him at last, repentant and dying, into her arms ; or that, within an hour of his death, she also went forth to her Heavenly Father, joy and gratitude in her heart, and on her lips the song of Simeon : ‘ Now, Lord, thou dost dismiss thy servant, according to thy word, in peace’. In each link of the chain we may trace the designs of a merciful Providence, who has thus, in his own good time, vindicated the reputation of the injured parents, protected the innocence of the helpless child, answered the supplications of an afflicted woman, and received, I trust, into his mercy a repenting sinner. And should you ask me why he did not do this sooner, I will answer that, as far as we may dare to penetrate into the judgment, it was because he would give us a lesson in his love—because he would teach us to cast our care yet more entirely on him—because he would make us understand, that ‘ His ways are not our ways’, His thoughts are not our thoughts ; and that He not only *can*, but very frequently does, bring about our wishes, by means which seem to us, shortsighted mortals that we are, inadequate, and even entirely opposed to their accomplishment”.

“ I was very wrong to talk of chance”, said the countess, smiling ; “ I should rather have called Genevieve ‘ the child of an especial Providence’ ”.

“ So she is, and so are we all”, said Father Ambrose, “ as we should soon acknowledge, would we but learn to examine calmly and dispassionately the

past tenor of our lives ; for then we should discover that no dispensation of Providence has ever reached us, which has not been conducive to our real welfare, when we ourselves have not flung away the blessing by our own impatience in its acceptance—we should find that in his mercy alone has he denied us the happiness we have passionately desired, or visited us with the afflictions which we have as vehemently sought to avert—we should feel ourselves forced to confess that he who rules the destinies of men and angels can, when it seems fitting unto him, draw good out of evil, order out of disorder, peace and harmony out of chaos and confusion. Would we but lay this lesson to our inmost hearts, with what calm confidence should we entrust ourselves to the guidance of our Heavenly Father—with what sweet assurance should we repose ourselves on his bosom—with what perfect acquiescence in his adorable will, should we receive at his hands sorrow or joy, sickness or health, poverty or riches, contempt or honour, the least thing as well as the greatest, certain that all is decreed by a love and mercy which will never fail us—a love and mercy which seem give to each one of us in particular, the precious right to consider himself as ‘the child of an especial Providence’ ”.

THE END.



Lost Genevieve; or the child of an especial providence By the author of '
Blind Agnese', 'The miner s daughter', 'Flowers und fruit', 'The virgin
mother', etc., etc

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